YOGA VASISHTA

in English by Dr. Ramesam Vemuri

Based on the original book in Telugu by

BRAHMASRI KUPPA VENKATA KRISHNA MURTY

BOOK 7

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha

LIBERATION - PART 2

Revised edition 2025

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About the Book

Yoga Vasishta is a treasure house of ancient Indian philosophical wisdom. It offers logical and practical answers to questions like: What is Mind? What is the world? What is the purpose of existence? What is Brahman?

It is a poetic classic by the Sage Valmiki explaining the nature of The Supreme Self expounded in his own inimitable and graceful way as a Discourse between Maharshi Vasishta and Lord Sri Rama.

The present volume, "Yoga Vasishta"– Book 7
Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa- Uttarārdha - 'Liberation' Part 2
is based on a presentation in Telugu by

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and forms a part of his lectures on "Yoga Vasishta" telecast
in Telugu by Gemini TV, Hyderabad, Telangana State, India.

This volume is a rendering of the same into English by

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In the chapter on 'Liberation' (Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa), the attainment of liberation is expounded at length.
This chapter has two parts, viz.
the first part, Pūrvārdha and the second part, Uttarārdha.
The subject is ably condensed and lucidly explained in 14,500 Slokas.
Due to the enormity of this narration and the vivid distinction in the content,
the two parts are presented as two books -

Yoga Vasishta - Book 6 - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha - Liberation - Part 1,
Yoga Vasishta - Book 7 - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha - Liberation - Part 2

pūrvardha comprises the steps of Deep Meditation (*samādhi yoga*) to be
followed in order to attain the Ultimate Calmness of mind. *uttarārdha* deals with
the way one stabilizes oneself in Eternal Bliss without being distracted after achieving it by following
the steps described in *pūrvārdha.*

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YOGA VASISHTA
Book 7
Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha
(LIBERATION) - PART 2

AUTHOR'S SUBMISSION

Why does an author keep the core message of his writing hidden deep inside his heart ?

He does so with the hope that the teaching would shine with double the vigor when a reader finally finds it. Because of that reason, he doesn't seal it securely in an iron vault; he only tucks it behind the tender petals of a colorful flower. His wish is that his heart should be accessible– but only to those readers who make a little effort to unravel it. Thus goes the thinking of great writers and poets; and in there lies the inner meaning of their poetic works.

The Celebrated Poet Kalidasa described the Sage Valmiki as the greatest of the spiritual guides. These words are very apt with respect to Yoga Vasishta. The poetic skills of any author may sparkle all by themselves when telling the story of a noble warrior and King like Shri Rama, or in narrating the end of the demon, Ravana. But writing a tome on the theme of a bone dry and abstruse subject like Vedanta with lyrical beauty, extending the text to 32,000 verses without losing the gravity in the discussions or the detail in narration in a gripping manner till the very end bespeaks of the immense capability of the Sage Valmiki. No other writer has attained such levels of excellence to date.

I consider myself blessed. Thanks to the benevolence and grace showered on me by my Gurus, Swami Janardanananda Saraswati and Swami Sri Ganapati Sachchidananda, I could fathom without much of an effort on my part, the depths of Sage Valmiki's heart and his teaching contained in Yoga Vasishta. With the purpose of sharing my understanding with all my fellow-seekers, I began a series of discourses on Yoga Vasishta on Gemini TV.

Inspired by the words of my teachers, I was tempted to investigate the inner meaning of Sage Valmiki's teaching. I was aided in my search by the redoubtable Saint Shri Ananda Bhodendra Saraswati Swami. His voluminous commentary on Yoga Vasishta under the title "tātparyaprakāśa vyākhya" repeatedly helped me in capturing the heights of knowledge disseminated in the text. This gave me the courage to gain the fruits of studying Yoga Vasishta.

Let me first introduce the venerable text Yoga Vasishta.

About Yoga Vasishta:

1. **Author:** Sage Valmiki
2. **Period of writing**: Some time after the completion of his earlier book, Ramayana.
3. **Alternate names** by which this book is known: jnānavāśiṣṭha, vāśiṣṭharāmāyaṇa, ūttara rāmāyaṇa, mahārāmāyaṇa, vāśiṣṭha etc. etc.

4. **Size of the text**: The original text of the *Yoga Vasishta* is traditionally said to comprise 32,000 verses. However, some scholars opine that the actual count may be less than 30,000 (based on the Nirnaya Sagar 1937 Edition). It should be noted that quantifying a work of such a magnitude and intricacy is a complex task. Ultimately, an overly critical investigation into the exact verse count offers little value to the reader in terms of absorbing the text's spiritual message.
5. **Subject matter**: Inquiry into the Supreme Self. It comprises the teaching given to the 12 year old prince Rama by the Sages Vishwamitra and Vasishta. The book establishes that the man enlightened by the wisdom of knowing the highest truth will be able to function with excellence in this world.
6. **The style of Narration and other specialties**:

- The gist of each topic to be discussed is summarized upfront.
- The subject is illustrated through a captivating story.
- The symbolical significance of the characters used in the stories is explained by the author himself.
- The object of the text is not about the denying or contradicting any other theories.
- There are no polemic debates.
- The author raises a number of questions from various angles and answers them himself.
- Though the subject matter is that of tough Vedanta, one can see the poetic skills of the author at innumerable instances.
- The text is full of unimaginable metaphors that capture the reader's heart.
- The dominant Sanskrit meter used in this composition is *Anustup Chandas*, a rhythmic structure traditionally employed in spiritual texts. According to the rules of this meter, each *sloka* consists of 32 syllables. In this context, it is interesting to consider the mystery and significance of the number 32 in Sanskrit literature and Hindu philosophy. The number 32 represents completeness, a set of significant spiritual principles, or a state of divine order and balance. While the *Anustup* meter prevails, Sage Valmiki also employs other meters to suit specific contextual nuances within the work.

7. **Abridged Versions**:

- As the text is quite voluminous, many condensed versions of the book have been prepared both in the Northern and Southern parts of India. Some of the more popular versions are:
- The text by the Kashmiri Pundit Abhinandana comprising 6,000 verses.
- The text by Shri Swami Vidya Prakasananda Giri, Head of the Shukabrahma Ashram, Kalahasti having 8,000 verses.

8. **Translations:** Translations of the text are available in almost all languages. There are six translations in Telugu language itself -- five in prose form and one as verses. I consulted all these books in my work and I am indebted to those authors. Out of these, the translation by Shri M. Subbaraya Sharma was particularly helpful to me.
9. **Expert views:** Yoga Vasishta is highly revered not only during the old historical times, but also in modern days by the spiritual teachers.

For example:

- Swami Ramatirtha described Yoga Vasishta as the "most wonderful" text.
- The book is highly revered by the Malayala Swami, The Head of the Erpedu Vyasa Ashram.
- Yoga Vasishta is acclaimed as the foremost amongst the books on Advaita by the Head of Gayatri Peetha.

10. Structure of Yoga Vasishta:

There are six chapters in the text.

- *Vairāgyaprakaraṇa* -- On Detachment -- 1,500 verses -This first chapter describes in detail the feelings of detachment experienced by Shri Rama.
- *Mumukśu Vyavahāra Prakaraṇa* – On the Conduct of a piritual Aspirant -- 1,000 verses. This second chapter gives the details of the basic qualities to be attained by a spiritual aspirant. The importance of human effort in achieving liberation is discussed and it has been established that it is necessary that an effort should be made to obtain liberation.
- *Utpattiprakaraṇa* – On Origination -- 7,000 verses –This third chapter examines the reality of the visible world and if it has been created at all.
- *Sthitiprakaraṇa* – On Sustenance -- 3,000 verses – This fourth chapter investigates how the apparent world is sustained.
- *Upaśamaprakaraṇa* – On the Calm Down -- 5,000 verses This fifth chapter talks of the method of obtaining a tranquil mind through True Knowledge.
- *Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa* – On Liberation -- 14,500 verses –This sixth and the final chapter is the largest wherein the achievement of Liberation is discussed thoroughly. It is divided into two parts - *Pūrvārdha and Uttarārdha*.

11. **Commentaries:** It is said that there are many commentaries in Sanskrit on YogaVasishta. However, only "tātparyaprakāśikā" by Swami Ananda Bhodhendra Saraswati is available in print. It was published by the NirnayaSagar Press in 1937. This commentary has received accolades from many learned pundits.

About Author Valmiki: It is opined by some experts that the author Valmiki of Yoga Vasishta was different from the author Valmiki of Ramayana. One group of such people belong to those that are opposed to Non-dualist philosophy. Their main concern is only to deprecate the importance of Yoga Vasishta as it is an unrivalled text on Non-duality. The other group contends that an evaluation on the authorship is called for using modern techniques rather than going by the word of tradition. Let us examine critically the various arguments advanced by this group.

The writing style of both Ramayana and Yoga Vasishta is about the same. In fact, no critic has been able to point out any major differences. However, some of these critics ask why there is not even a hint made about Yoga Vasishta in Ramayana. The answer to this question is available right in the first chapter of Yoga Vasishta. One may take a look.

The second argument is that because we find reference to Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna, Arjuna, Sage Suka and others in Yoga Vasishta, it should belong to a period later than that of Bhagavad-Gita. But if we keep in mind the caliber and skill of a writer who could handle a complex and intricate subject as Advaita Vednata with such a dexterity as found in the book, it is unlikely that we will be persuaded to conclude that such an enlightened and exceptionally competent author belonging to a later period would have tried to create a false impression about the date of his work. Hence, it is untenable to argue that it belongs to the post-Bhagavad-Gita period.

A question may, however, arise about the reference to the events of later eons (*yuga*) in the text. But inclusion of a reference to the events that are likely to take place at a future date is quite typical of the Sage Valmiki. He did so in his other and more popular work, Ramayana too. In fact, in the Balakanda of Ramayana, his narration cuts across past, present and future times in the description of different events. Sage Valmiki resorts to this type of narrating the future in uttarakanda of Ramayana also. Thus the narration of future events as seen by him through clairvoyance is a characteristic of the Sage Valmiki. It is no wonder that we find examples of such descriptions of future events in Yoga Vasishta also. In fact, whenever a future event is described, the author raises a question through one of the characters in the book about the chronological inconsistency and a suitable reply is given right there. Readers familiar with the works of other great Seers and Sages do not find this style of writing odd at all. For example, we find future events being narrated at a current time in Agastya Samhita. Sage Vyasa authored an entire purana which describes the future events only.

Thus when viewed with an unbiased eye, it is inevitable to conclude that the author of Yoga Vasishta and Ramayana was one and the same poet.

Further, we have to note that the Sage Valmiki was not only a writer *par excellence*, but also a great Maharishi. The word 'Rishi' in Sanskrit means the one who realized the ultimate Truth (*tatva*). A true writer is one who can speak accurately. Because he has both these qualities, he could write with such a depth of understanding and beauty. We notice several instances of this signature style of the Sage in both Ramayana and Yoga Vasishta.

I studied and tried to decipher the core message of Yoga Vasishta and the commentaries on it with the same spirit. I took help from elders, prayed to my teachers, and also consulted the teachings of Shri Janardanananda Swami who was not only a noble saint but also happened to be my father before his renunciation of the world. What I could understand is presented by me in my discourses that were telecast by the Gemini TV and the same is now offered in the form of a text. That is the reason it is called as the 'heart' of Yoga Vasishta.

We find a variation in spelling of the name of the Sage Vasishta. It is written in the Devanagari script both as Vaśiṣṭha and Vasiṣṭha. Both ways are correct as the former spelling is derived to mean as the one who conquered his senses and the latter one means the one who excelled as a householder.

Sage Vasishta himself clarified that writing his name either way was acceptable as quoted in a verse in Mahabharata (Canto 13, Chapter 63, verse 96). I adopted 'Vaśiṣṭha' in my writings as it would emphasize the importance of control, over the senses which is an important requisite in the study of Vedanta.

Acknowledgements:

All words are inadequate to express my indebtedness to my Teacher, Swami Ganapati Sachchidnananda. Therefore, I dedicate this work to him. I am also grateful to Gemini TV for telecasting my discourses. I tried to present the teaching contained in Yoga Vasishta in a logical manner and with a modern idiom. Please condone any omissions or commissions. However, my request to the readers is that this presentation should not be treated to be a condensation or abridgement of the original text. It is an effort to capture the "core" message and please study it in that spirit.

I am only nominally there in delivering this message. The inner sentient principle that motivates, acts and speaks is different. I pray to my Gurus to channel the Grace of that inexplicable principle to all in experientially realizing It.

Salutations to the Gurus.

Kuppa Venkata Krishna Murthy

1. Introduction

Yoga Vasishta - Book 6 - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha - Liberation - Part 1 closed with Lord Rama being brought back from his deep meditative state (*samādhi*) into the empirical world by Sage Vasishta at the request of Sage Viswamitra. One may infer from the way Sage Valmiki described the entire event that Self-realization happens effortlessly to a fully eligible and mature individual at the completion of a single cycle of Listening (to Scriptural teachings) and Reflection (on what is heard). However, it is possible that a number of doubts and reservations may still continue to persist in the mind of a seeker regarding the attainment of a stable and lasting Realization of the Self. Some of the questions that beg an answer could be:

Will a Self-realized individual be able to function back again in the phenomenal world or not?

In case (s) he is back in the activities of the world, would his mind lose Identity with Brahman?

Is there a way to abide firmly in Brahman even if the mind of a Self-realized individual happens to dwell on such worldly affairs that are contrary to a position of Self-realization?

Sage Viswamitra and other saints and ascetics were undoubtedly happy at Rama attaining Self-realization (*samādhi*). Yet they wanted Sage Vasishta to interrupt Rama's *samādhi* state and bring him back into the phenomenal world. What could be the possible reason behind such a request of Sage Viswamitra and others? Could they have wished to botch up the Self-Knowledge of Rama? Or is it possible for one to continue to abide in Brahman though he may be out of *samādhi*?

There is an obvious need for clarity to emerge on the above matters.

It is precisely for that reason Sage Valmiki continues with Book 7 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha - Liberation - Part 2. The Sage did deliberate on these issues during the earlier chapters; yet we find a marked difference in the way these matters are raised and then resolved again in this Book 7. The solutions offered in the previous *prakaranās* were discussed from the position of an individual who had not as yet attained Self-realization (*samādhi*). The current discussions are presented from the viewpoint of a Self-realized man. Sometimes Sage Valmiki repeats in the forthcoming Sargas the very same verses that he talked about in the previous *prakaranās*. But he adopts each time a novel way in establishing the point in an argument. Further, he digs deeper into the meaning underlying the stories he illustrated previously and explicates them in a new light. Hence one cannot lightly dismiss the Book 7 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha - Liberation - Part 2 a mere repetition of the past *prakaranās*.

Sage Valmiki gives greater importance to the matters of principle and related technical aspects in his deliberations in this Book 7 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha - Liberation - Part 2. He narrates far fewer stories.

As a result, the discourses wear a scriptural hue and may even occasionally seem highly pedantic. We shall, however, try to present here the exposition in as simple a manner as possible. The discussions between Lord Rama and Sage Vasishta ended in the 126th Sarga of Book 6 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha - Liberation - Part 1. The next two Sargas (127 and 128) were the description of the dialog between Sage Valmiki and his disciple, Bharadwaj. The dialog takes off with a question posed by Bharadwaj whether Lord Rama had had any unresolved issues pending at that stage.

As a matter of fact, there is no possibility for any questions to arise in the mind of an individual who is in *samādhi*. There is, however, scope for doubts to crop up after one comes out of the *samādhi*. It happened in Rama's experience too.

Sage Vasishta addressed Rama as follows before the latter went into *samādhi*:

अहंममेति संविदन्न दुःखतो विमुच्यते ।
असंविदन्विमुच्यते यदीप्सितं समाचर ।।

ahaṃmameti saṃvidanna duḥkhato vimucyate |
asaṃvidanvimucyate yadīpsitaṃ samācara ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha, Sarga 126, Sloka 102

(Meaning: Rama, as long as one entertains the thoughts of 'me' and 'mine', one will not be free from sorrow. When those thoughts come to an end, sorrow too ends and one gets liberated. Please do as you wish).

Rama began his discussion with Sage Vasishta precisely on this topic as soon as he awoke from *samādhi*.

Rama: Revered Teacher! Your instruction is to forego the thoughts (related to me and mine). But the presence of a body and the senses depend on such concepts only. If we get rid of such notions, the body senses and life may collapse together having lost their very relevance. In effect that is the death of the seeker. But you point out that liberation lies in giving up the thoughts of 'me and mine'. After all, liberation has a meaning only if the man is alive. Is the individual to be dead in order to attain liberation?

[**Note:** Rama asked a similar question in the 16th Sarga of Book 5 of Yoga Vasishta - Upasama Prakaraṇa, the chapter on 'The Calm Down'. Sage Vasishta explained at that point that Eradication of Impressions could be achieved either through Contemplation-based Approach or Wisdom-based Approach. He said that Contemplation-based Approach leads to *jīvanmukti* (Liberation in this life) whereas Wisdom-based Approach leads to *videhamukti* (Liberation after leaving the body).

A discussion on the topic again came up in the 90th Sarga of the same book. Sage Vasishta said there that Annulment of Mind could happen in two ways. These were Ending the Mind With or Without Retention of Form. The former results in *jīvanmukti* and the latter in *videhamukti*.

The question was raised again in the 111th Sarga of Book 6 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha - Liberation - Part 1. That was in the context of discussing the methodology adopted by Kach for the attainment of liberation. The Sage gave a very concise reply to the question at that place. We also commented on the possible reasons for repeatedly raising the very same question. The same question is being answered here in the Book 7 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha - Liberation - Part 2 in a different way.]

2. Give up All Conceptualization

Vasishta: Rama! You seem to say that the body will be lost if mentation ends. What exactly is mentation? The idea that "I am the body" over this lump of the skin, bones and flesh is by itself a mentation. To abide in infinite Consciousness forsaking such contracted perspective is the abandonment of mentation. Even the notion that all appearances including the body are real is an imagination. An ability to consider everything that is perceived as a form of the Supreme Consciousness is abandonment of mentation. Another way to express the same is that cognition of objects is conceptualization and non-cognition is giving up of the conceptualization.

Think it over now whether your body is the basis for your conceptualization or conceptualization is the basis for your body. So long as you take yourself to be possessed of a body, obviously, the body will be the basis for mentation. It is not that your imagination causes the body. Hence it is not logical to presume that body will be lost if mentation ends.

Rama: Well then Sir, who causes the body to come about and what sustains it?

Vasishta: That is called *prārabdha* (Current suffrage). It is the effect of past actions. It brings about the body. It sustains it. When once the Current suffrage is expended away, the body will collapse irrespective of the fact whether you gave up on mentation or not. As long as the Current suffrage lasts, nothing happens to the body even if you relinquish mentation.

Also remember that mentation can be given up only by a living individual. A dead man cannot do it. As a matter of fact, the mind becomes placid once you abandon conceptualization. Consequently, the life-force too moves peacefully. The life span of such a *Yogi* will increase but will not diminish.

Hence Rama, do give up all mentation without any reservation. Let no new innate tendencies (*sanskārās* – see Glossary) settle in you. Go ahead and perform fearlessly all actions that come upon you as the effects of past deeds. I say this with all my force. I said this in the past too.

ऊर्ध्वबाहुर्विरौम्येष न च कश्चिच्छृणोति मे ।
असंकल्पः परं श्रेयः स किमन्तर्न भाव्यते ।।

ūrdhvabāhurviraumyeṣa na ca kaścicchṛṇoti me |
asaṃkalpaḥ paraṃ śreyaḥ sa kimantarna bhāvyate ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 1, Sloka 11

*[**Note:** The very same verse appeared as the 94th verse in Sarga 126 of Book 6 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha - Liberation - Part 1.]*

I have been shouting raising my hands up in the air. I have been howling for this for so long. Hardly anyone follows what I say. It is highly beneficial to forsake conceptualization. Why don't they assimilate this into their innards ?

It is the effect of the delusion. Giving up mentation is such a simple and easy one to implement. It does not depend on any externals. It requires no effortation. Still nobody cares !

बहुनात्र किमुक्तेन संक्षेपादिदमुच्यते ।
संकल्पनं मनोबन्धस्तदभावो विमुक्तता ।।

bahunātra kimuktena saṃkṣepādidamucyate |
saṃkalpanaṃ manobandhastadabhāvo vimuktatā ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 1, Sloka 27

Rama ! Let me put it in simple words. Conceptualization implies imagination. Concisely expressed, conceptualization is bondage. Getting rid of it is liberation.

Rama: How does one do it?

Vasishta: No specific action needs to be carried out for this. Nor is there any 'thing' to be eschewed. Just be as you are.

पश्यन्कर्मण्यकर्मत्वमकर्मणि च कर्मताम् ।
यथाभूतार्थचिद्रूपः शान्तमास्व यथासुखम् ।।

paśyankarmaṇyakarmatvamakarmaṇi ca karmatām |
yathābhūtārthacidrūpaḥ śāntamāsva yathāsukham ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 1, Sloka 29

Consider what all you do as inaction. Inaction means actionless Brahman. Perform only the obligatory and the most essential works as inaction. Acting thus, abide forever peacefully and happily in your own pristine Supreme Consciousness.

*[**Note:** This verse closely resembles the following Sloka of Bhagavad-Gita:*

कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्म यः ।
स बुद्धिमान्मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत्

karmaṇyakarma yaḥ paśyedakarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ |
sa buddhimānmanuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt ||

Bhagavad Gita iv - 18

(Meaning: He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is intelligent among men. He is a Yogi and a doer of all action).

The similarity in the core message conveyed by the Gita and Yogavaasishta can easily be seen here.]

Vasishta: (Continuing) May you be blessed with freedom from thoughts !

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta repeated at this point the verse quoted at Chapter: Nirvana, Book – I, Sarga 126, Sloka 102. As this instance exemplifies, the Sage repeats in Book – II again and again the very same verses that were narrated earlier. We shall, however, avoid such repetitions in our commentary.]

असंसक्तमतिस्तिष्ठ हा शिलोदरमौनवत्

asaṃsaktamatistiṣṭha hā śilodaramaunavat

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 2, Sloka 5

Stay stable like the silence at the center of a rock relinquishing all concepts of the mind.

3. Renounce All Action

Rama: Guru Dev! How can Non-attachment (*asamsakti*) alone by itself eliminate all the innate tendencies? I suppose, therefore, that renunciation of action too has to go with non-attachment. Of what good is action for a liberated individual who got rid of the mentation of 'me and mine'? What misfortune can befall on such a man if he quits action? Is it not the best for him to stay put doing nothing?

Vasishta: Rama! Will you please expand in detail what is action, what is causal for action and how can one eliminate action?

Rama: Teacher! If anything is to be eradicated totally, one should destroy the root cause for it. We wish to eliminate action. So we should first find the root cause for action.

Action is generated by the body. The body originates with the 'individual' (*jīva*). The Supreme Consciousness becomes the 'individual' when It turns towards objects.

Chandagyopanishad says that Consciousness enters into the triad of the fundamental elements (*bhutas*), Fire-Water-Food, and becomes an individual (*jīva*). Thus does the 'individual' acquire two components – The Consciousness factor and The object factor. The root cause for object factor is Consciousness associated with nescience. Consciousness factor has its basis in Pure Consciousness, it has no other cause.

It is, therefore, clear that the main or root cause for actions is the tendency of the Consciousness to turn towards objects. This is also called 'A flash wave of thought.' The Flash wave of thought produces I-consciousness to begin with. From that generates the feeling that 'I am the agent of an action.' This notion is causal for actions. Hence the first thing to do in order to be free from actions is to evade the flash wave of thought.

All of the above is what you taught me and I am just repeating it in front of you.

Vasishta: Good, but a man has to renounce the entire gamut of actions related to his body and mind if he has to eliminate the flash wave of thought. It is so because as long as there is a body, an individual cannot escape from perceptual superimposition (*driśya adhyāsa*). The flash wave of thought you referred to will cognize one thing or the other from moment to moment. The very moment cognizance takes place, action happens.

Only in deep sleep does one have no flash wave of thought or any kind of imagination. However, it is not an everlasting state. Deep sleep is always followed by dream and wakeful states. Hence, it is impossible to obtain the state of total renunciation of action as you opine. That's why I said that you should achieve quietude.

Quietude means the absence of any feelings of attachment within the mind. When once you reach that state, you will lose any sense of doership of the actions which come by on their own. The feeling that "I am not the doer" will get firmly established in you. Even if actions take place when having such a frame of mind, it is equivalent to elimination of actions. There is only one route to achieving the elimination of actions. It is through a clear understanding of the fact that Self is a Non-doer."

Rama: Sir, from the knowledge that Self is not an agent for actions, the illusory appearance of the objective world may end. How could the flash wave of thought be negated along with its root cause?

Vasishta: Rama, you yourself indicated that the flash wave of thought implicitly means the tendency of the Consciousness to turn towards an objective world. What does "turning towards objects" involve? Is it not the Consciousness-Self identifying itself with the objects perceived ?

Does it not mean that Consciousness is melding with the objects of Consciousness is manifest in the form of an individual? So the 'flash wave of thought' is obviously action-oriented. The knowledge that Self is not an agent for action completely contradicts the object component of the flash wave of thought.

If the object component is destroyed, where is the question of identification with the objects? Hence the 'flash wave of thought' itself will evaporate.

With the ending of the flash wave of thought, the fallacious appearance of Consciousness in the individual (*jīva*) will also be lost. Thus Pure Consciousness will only remain. In other words, no action occurs in the individual. As a result, that individual attains renunciation of actions.

Hence I have been suggesting that renunciation of actions should be achieved through non-attachment obtained from a knowledge of the absence of agency for action for the Self.

Rama: Respected Sir, you enunciated the doctrine that 'the unreal never is and the Real never is not.'

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।।

nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 3, Sloka 1

That being so, how can a sensed perception (*vedana*) become unperceived ?

Vasishta: Rama, the doctrine of Beingness recapitulated by you is correct. If the sensed perception were to be true, it would not have been unperceived. But there is no truth either in the word or in its meaning. It is just like the serpent in a rope. So what else can an untrue sensation be other than being unreal?

Hence you should not cling to the falsely perceived sensation. It is better to get a hold on the word 'Knowledge' and its meaning. Knowledge is Pure Knowing. The knowledge one has in the transactional world is empirical knowledge. That is a different type of knowledge. Unqualified Knowledge is a form of the immutable self-Consciousness. It stands for Om. It facilitates liberation. Understand this well and be free of vacillations. Sustaining this Knowledge, no one will be subjected to either merit (*punya*) or sin (*pāpa*).

The very substance inside an apple becomes a seed within it. Similarly, the Supreme Consciousness becomes the mind and the triad (*triputi*). Hence the triad is no different from the Self. If you realize this fact fully, there is no more scope for the seed of action that you referred to earlier to arise.

Renunciation of action then happens effortlessly. It is sheer ignorance to presume that restraint of the action organs is renunciation of action. The take home message is that any action that happens without a desire is inaction.

Such an action is like a burnt out seed. Hence one should attain renunciation of action through Knowledge.

Liberation comes easily for one whose feelings of 'me and mine' are calmed down because of an understanding of Self-Knowledge. When Pure Consciousness becomes object oriented, the first thing that is generated, as you yourself pointed out, is I-consciousness. Along with I-consciousness germinates the feeling of 'mine.' These two form the root for the world.

Hence one has to eliminate the feelings of 'me and mine' to begin with. It requires constant practice of egolessness. Egolessness is the opposite of I-consciousness (ego). It is a feeling of 'I am not this', 'I am not this.'

Rama: Sir, egolessness is also after all a feeling. Any sort of feeling is a part of superimposition (*adhyāsa*). How does one get rid of it?

Vasishta: We add the paste of Water Purifying Fruit (Botanical name : Strychnos potatorum) to turbid water. It actually amounts to adding more turbidity in the form of the paste. But don't the paste and the water turbidity together get precipitated? In the same way if one practices egolessness, it combines with the ego and together the two get destroyed. So the key is to generate egolessness every time the ego appears.

The first step towards this end is to conquer greed etc.

लोभो लज्जा मदो मोहो येनादाविति नो जिताः ।
निरर्थकमनर्थेऽस्मिन्स किमर्थं प्रवर्तते ।।

lobho lajjā mado moho yenādāviti no jitāḥ |
nirarthakamanarthe'sminsa kimarthaṃ pravartate ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 4, Sloka 21

Rama! Avarice, shyness in practice, pride, misapprehension etc. should be overcome to start with. Vedanta will be a dangerous game for a person unprepared. Why should such a man enter into this path? Hence adopt proper methods and achieve egolessness.

The sum and substance of all of this is that the practice of feeling that there is no agency of action for Self is the best way to attain Brahman. You thought that inaction is to sit tight restraining the action organs. That is plainly a mistake. I explained to you that the main foundation for inaction is egolessness and constant observation of egolessness will remove both the ego and egolessness resulting in the feeling of non-doership. I also indicated that control of organs is a prerequisite for this. It is a very important point to be noted. The great Sage Bhusunda once talked about it. Let me narrate that story to you.

4. The Story of Vidhyadhara

Vasishta: I had already mentioned to you that I used to visit Sage Bhusunda once in a while. During one of those trips I posed him a question as follows:

'Revered Sage Bhusunda! Have you ever happened to meet an individual who had been living for a long time in spite of him being a fool lacking in Self-Knowledge?'

Bhusunda replied to this question on these lines.

Bhusunda: Maharishi Vasishta! Long back one Vidhyadhara lived on the peaks of The Lokaaloka Mountain Range*. He had no Knowledge of the Self. He had all the divine powers that were common to the clan of Vidhyadharas (a type of celestial beings). He immersed himself totally in sensual pleasures taking advantage of those powers. One day he came to know that his life was coming to an end. He was scared of his death and embarked on a course of strict discipline and observance of virtuous deeds. He performed many austerities for the sake of gaining a long life. Consequently, his lifespan increased. As and when he got again an indication of an end to his life, he resumed the austerities and meditation. He lived thus for a period of four Kalpas (see Glossary) alternating between sensuous life and strict discipline, the primary aim being enjoyment of life and observation of austerities being secondary in his life.

Though observance of austerities was of a low priority for him, discretion began to sprout in his mind towards the end of the fourth Kalpa because of the frequent observation of austerity and meditation. Under that influence, he began to think like this: 'Oh, Gosh ! My life is being threatened by death so many times! And to escape death I have been performing austerities repeatedly. Several cycles of birth and death must have happened to me already. How do I stop the turning of this wheel of birth and death? Is there no way to be free from senescence? Can no one eternally last in the world?'

Such questions and thoughts rolled in his mind for a long time. He searched desperately for everlasting and gainful things in the world. He got thoroughly frustrated and disappointed in life. Someone directed him to see me. By the time he came to me, he was quite old and wrinkled. I appeared to be much younger in looks compared to him! He bowed to me with all humility. I received him with befitting hospitality. He stayed with me for some days. Finding a suitable occasion when I was quite relaxed, he posed this question to me.

[**Note: *** The Lokaaloka Mountain Range: The boundary layer surrounding the earth beyond the four quarters (directions). Light terminates at this layer. (See also Section: 26).]

Vidhyadhara: Oh, Great Yogi Bhusunda! My sense organs seem to be like soft swords. They are docile and soft until they find their attractions. Then they turn rigid and hard. They change into sharp knives. I have been at the mercy of these sense organs for the last four Kalpas. As I come from the clan of Vidhyadharas, there is no dearth of luxuries for me. Even then I am unable to attain lasting happiness.

Of what use is my richness? As I keep thinking about this plight of mine, I feel now that even an ordinary human being unyielding to the temptations of the senses is far better off than a celestial being like me. Elders say that being associated with knowledgeable people will help in diminishing the vigor of the senses. That is the reason I came to you. I take refuge in you. Kindly teach me the essence of Truth and save me.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki devoted as much as a Sarga and half to this conversation. Vidhyadhara's story starts with the 13th verse of the Fifth Sarga and goes on till the end of the Sixth Sarga. These verses give a graphic picture of the havoc played by the senses. Through these verses he hopes to motivate people to practice detachment. Because of the extensive descriptions and explanations, the story of Vidhyadhara stretches from the 5th to the 16th Sarga. We shall present below a summary of the 12 Sargas (5th to 16th).]

5. Renouncing I-consciousness (Ego)

Bhusunda: Lord Vidhyadhara! Your thoughts are on the right track now. It is your good fortune that you desire to be out of this cycle of births and deaths. A person in your disposition will be able to absorb correctly virtuous teaching. Hence I consent to instruct you proper Knowledge.

यदिदं वच्मि तत्सर्वमोमित्यादातुमर्हसि ।
अस्माभिश्चिरमन्विष्टं नात्र कार्या विचारणा ।।

yadidaṃ vacmi tatsarvamomityādātumarhasi |
asmābhiścirmanviṣṭaṃ nātra kāryā vicāraṇā ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 7, Sloka 5

For the present accept in good faith what I teach you because it is the distilled wisdom arrived at after considerable deliberation in my mind. You do not have to reexamine it. Turn your attention inwardly. Inquire into your 'self'. You find there a thought wave of 'I', 'I', 'I'. That is the I-consciousness in you. Its name is ego. You are able to observe it. Therefore, you are the witness for it. Please understand this clearly. You are not that which says 'I', 'I'. "You" are the witness of that 'I'. When you know that you are not the I-consciousness (ego), you cannot obviously be the mind, intellect etc. The visible phenomenal world too is impermanent like them. All of them arise and dissolve. They lack beingness. That which says 'I' 'I' is non-existent. The world has no existence. What is Brahman only. The entire world will turn auspicious for you once this Truth is firmed up in your mind. You will never again experience 'sorrow.'

A question on how the world originated may arise now. Some say that the world originated because of nescience. But it sometimes looks that the genesis of nescience lies in the world. It is difficult to say which caused which.

Anyways, that is not any of our concern here. The take home lesson for us is that both the world and nescience are one and the same. There are broadly two ways to contemplate this. Consider the world to be the water in a mirage. What appears to be water in a mirage is in fact light only. Likewise what appears as the world is none other than Brahman. This is one perspective. Or you may consider the world as a mere illusion, non-existent like the water in a mirage. Illusion is something that appears though it does not really exist (*mithya*). The world is unreal and its substratum is Brahman. This is the second perspective.

Either way, you happen to see a non-existent world. Examine deeply what could be the seed (root cause) for such a world to emerge. You will find that I-consciousness is the seed. The mighty tree of the universe comprising the fourteen worlds (*lokas*) is the phantasm that germinated out of that seed.

However gargantuan may be the tree, its root cause is I-consciousness. So if the root cause is eliminated, the entire tree will collapse. The fire that can burn the seed of I-consciousness is egolessness alone. Hence, if the thought wave of I-consciousness is negated by the thought wave of egolessness, one attains liberation (JIvanmukti) right in this life. One may, however, continue to see and experience the polar opposites like happiness and sorrow in the world even after *jīvanmukti* because he has to exhaust the residual balance of the current suffrage (*prārabdha*). Nevertheless, the world does not regenerate for him.

Egolessness is a form of Self-Knowledge. Once you achieve it,

कुतोऽहंत्वं कुतस्त्वंत्वं कुतो द्वित्वैक्यविभ्रमः

kuto'haṃtvaṃ kutastvaṃtvaṃ kuto dvitvaikyavibhramaḥ

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 8, Sloka 5

What is ‘me’? What is ‘you’? Neither exists. Nor is there any duality. Nor Oneness.

If you try giving up thoughts following the instructions from a Guru, you will definitely succeed and attain *jīvanmukti*. Vidhyadhara! You may invoke several metaphors to drive home the point that the world is an illusion. You may consider the world as a drawing on a wall. A child may feel happy when it sees the figure of a cow on the wall. There is really a cow on the wall in its perspective. The figure makes the kid happy. But can you milk that cow? Can the figure of a cow help appease hunger? From the perspective of an adult concerned with milk and hunger, the drawing is merely a bunch of lines and not real cows. Similarly for those who take it at a superficial level, the world is real. The world has no reality for those who contemplate deeply.

People knowledgeable of the Truth can generate a world of their own liking through their thoughts. They can dissolve the world by their thoughts. The trick in their hands is the contemplation on the essence of Self. Get hold of the technique of contemplation on the Self and erase the phenomenal world. It is not enough to go up to Consciousness. You have to attain Absolute Consciousness. You may wonder about the difference between the two. Let me clarify. Consciousness exists 24/7, pervades everything and permeates everywhere. It is close to all perceivables and it is the substrate for all things. An object does not get illuminated if Consciousness does not form its substratum. Thus, everyone has access to Consciousness though unknown to himself. One does not get liberated by it. One has to reach the Pure Absolute Consciousness untouched by any visible objects.

When a ray of Sun enters water, the heat will be gone but the light will stay. Likewise, if your mind enters the Pure Self-Consciousness, its perturbations get attenuated and dissolve in Pure Absolute Consciousness. This is JIvanmukti – liberation right in this life.

Vidhyadhara: Why should we presume that a percept is always dependent on Consciousness? There could as well be some objects unrelated to Consciousness.

Bhusunda: If that were to be the position, how would you have known the object? There is no scope to perceive it. Further, we have already accepted that Consciousness is omnipresent. Hence it is impossible to have a visible object without being in touch with Consciousness.

Vidhyadhara: How could visible objects co-exist with Consciousness whose attributes are contradictory to themselves?

Bhusunda: Why not? Don't you have fire (heat) in water? Is it not because of the latent heat present in water that heat gets generated from the friction encountered by flowing water? It is also well known that fiery volcanoes exist in the seas.

Vidhyadhara: In case Consciousness and Percepts coexist, how can contemplation on Consciousness eradicate the perceivable objects?

Bhusunda: Does not the same wind generate or extinguish the flames? In the same manner, Consciousness is the reason for the origination and dissolution of the percepts.

Vidhyadhara: How does one grasp Consciousness?

Bhusunda: Consciousness appears both as sentient and inert objects. You are a sentient object. You comprehend it by a modification of the mind as the 'me'. It is called the modification in the form of 'I'. You comprehend the perceivables with the modification of the mind as 'this'. It is named as the modification in the form of 'this'.

Now take the modification in the form of 'I'. Eradicate it by means of your firm understanding after an analysis that the part 'me' has no true existence. Then the modification in the form of 'I' will get destroyed along with the part, 'me'. Along with both of these, the modification in the form of 'this' too will get destroyed automatically. What remains then is Pure Absolute Consciousness.

Vidhyadhara: Both the sentient and insentient parts are mixed together in the process proposed by you. Out of them you are destroying the insentient part only. Will not the sentient part too get destroyed by this process?

Bhusunda: It is not necessary that they both should get eliminated together simply because they co-exist. For example if you boil milk mixed with water, water evaporates and milk will remain. Therefore, you can without doubt go ahead and try to eradicate the modification in the form of 'I'. If you do so, you will contemplate on Brahman in *Samadhi* state and on the world when you are not in *samādhi*. Practice now whatever you desire.

चिच्चमत्कृतयो व्योम्नि स्फुरन्त्येता जगत्तया ।
अर्कांशुवदरोधिन्यः स्वच्छा विदितवेदिनाम् ।

ciccamatkṛtayo vyomni sphurantyetā jagattayā |
arkāṃśuvadarodhinyaḥ svacchā viditavedinām |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 9, Sloka 10

The surprising thing is that what binds you in your state of ignorance is Consciousness. It is again Consciousness only which liberates you when you obtain Self-Knowledge.

For instance, say that a traveler in a desert found a deluge of flowing water. He got scared that the rising flows might drown him. He could not take even a step forward out of fear. What exactly was inhibiting his movement – was it water flow or the sun rays? Obviously, it is the rays of the sun. After a time, some people around him explained to him again and again that it was a mirage. He slowly understood it to be only an effect of the sun's rays and not a true deluge of water. He could then walk again and go on with his journey. What freed his legs now? It is the sun rays only.

Similarly, the very same Consciousness is the reason for bondage and freedom. With Self-Knowledge, Consciousness liberates. In the absence of Self-Knowledge what ties you down is the Consciousness and not the inert things. All these inert substances are nothing but Consciousness in a strange form. In other words, they are the appearances of Consciousness only. Do not worry about them. Hold on to the undivided Infinite Consciousness only.

***[Note:** This subject matter was discussed in The Story of Leela also in the Third Chapter: Origination.]*

6. Insentience Doesn't Exist

Bhusunda: Vidhyadhara! The main reason for your inability to grasp Consciousness is the fact that your mind is focused mainly on inert objects. The counterintuitive truth that you have to realize to begin with is that there is nothing insentient in this world. It is a fundamental mistake to suppose that inert things exist in the world. The reflection inside water of the rising flames has to be water itself and not fire! The inert substances that are seen too are similarly Consciousness Itself. Well, look, the cognition of an insentient thing happens to you. Whose nature is it to cognize? It is the quality of Consciousness to cognize. How are you able to cognize things? After all, it is because of Consciousness.Therefore, what all you perceive is Consciousness. If you understand this fact clearly, the inert world will not bind you.

Vidhyadhara: Sir, you are speaking under the presumption that there is an immutable Supreme Consciousness free from all modifications such as birth etc. Suppose we do not accept the existence of such a Brahman?

Bhusunda: If that is the case, it becomes meaningless to inquire into liberation.

Vidhyadhara: If we accept the existence of such a Brahman, don't we have to admit that it is His nature to go on forever creating these insentient objects?

Bhusunda: That would be a greater mistake. We can determine the nature of a substance provided there is another substance adjoining to it. But the Supreme Consciousness, Brahman is non-dual, without a second. Hence, we cannot talk about the qualities of Brahman. Consequently, we do have to conclude that insentient substances have no existence. Whatever exists, it is all the Conscious Supreme Self. Whether you call it a ring or gold, it is actually gold only. In the same way, whether you call it world or Brahman, it is Brahman only!

It's true though, one cannot come to this understanding easily. The senses have to be conquered to begin with. It is not as simple as it sounds. Even if arrows pierce through your body or even if your beloved seductively embraces you, there should be no arousal or any change in your mind. That is the level to which you have to obtain control on the senses.

Next, learn to look at your body in the same neutral way that you look at other things like a pot or a pebble. As a preparatory step for this, you should give up the feelings of 'me and mine' with respect to your body. After these feelings get diminished, practice perceiving the entire world as Brahman and Consciousness. Once you firmly abide in this, you will be Brahman.

यत्रत्वस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत् तत् केन कं पश्येत

yatratvasya sarvamātmaivābhūt tat kena kaṃ paśyet

Brihadaranyka upanishad

When the entire visible world is his own Self, with what will that great sage perceive and what will he perceive in that state? Vedic aphorisms as above confirm what I said.

Anyway, it is ignorance that hinders you from realizing the Infinite, Undivided Pure Consciousness. If you get rid of the ignorance, the Gross* and Subtle* Worlds which are nothing but its effects will also disappear with it. In order to understand this, it is necessary for you to appreciate that the thoughts that arise in you are the modifications of your mind. Let me explain this to bring in more clarity for you.

Nobody really knows what space is. But everyone behaves as if he knows what space is. This fact is familiar to all of us. But say a half-wit imagines a second space within this space. The imagination of a 'me' superimposed on Consciousness Self is like that.

You see, none knows what Self-Consciousness is. But everyone behaves as if he knows it. So it is similar to space. The same quality is reflected in the sense of 'me'. Hence it is also like space. That is the reason why I have used this illustration.

[* Gross and Subtle Worlds: Gross world refers to the senses and body. Subtle world refers to I-consciousness.]

Vidhyadhara: The example you gave does not jell well, Sir! In your illustration, there are two spaces and a person imagining them. Thus there are three entities. But in reality what we have are the Consciousness Self and the sense of 'me'. Only two and not three. The third entity, namely the individual, does not exist.

Bhusunda: There are only two entities in the example I gave you too. One is the space and the other is the individual. Because the second space is merely a part of his imagination, it cannot be a third entity. Hence your objection is not tenable.

Let us come back to the message I wanted to convey through the illustration I cited. The person in the story makes explicit another mental construct. But it is also a part of his imagination like that of the second space and then saying that there are two spaces. Every living human being with his imagination splits the ignorance within him into two components. One he calls as 'me' and the other he calls as 'this' ('not-me'). He fancies them to be two separate things and gets deluded. This is obviously an illusion.

The point to be noted is that what appears as 'me' and what appears as 'not-me' are not any different from ignorance. Expressed in a different way, 'I' (or 'me') and 'this' (or 'not-me') are illusory forms of Pure Consciousness.

Now we have to understand who or what is ignorance. Ignorance is also an illusory appearance of Consciousness. But it is difficult for an individual who is enveloped by ignorance to accept this. The reason is that the people, who are around, are also by themselves in an ignorant state. They imagine ignorance to be real and therefore, act and talk as if ignorance is a real thing.

If you overcome this view and transcend to the Absolute view (*Brahma dristi*), ignorance is not a true thing. Hence, a seeker has to try to go beyond this ignorance. The method to do it is to progressively annihilate the creation of ignorance – namely I-consciousness, intellect and mind.

The way to destroy I-consciousness etc. is to follow Knowers of Truth with unwavering faith. This action results in *Subhechcha* – a longing for liberation. It is the first step in the Path of Yoga. A considerable chunk (about a half) of ignorance causal for the possessive feelings towards one's wife and kids will be lost because of this step.

Next the seeker has to listen (*shravana*) to Vedanta attentively. Later he should practice Reflection (*manana*) on what is heard and observe Deep Contemplative Meditation (*nididhyāsana*). As a result a quarter of the ignorance (projecting power of ignorance) causal for identification with the body etc. will be lost.

By this time, the seeker will begin to contemplate on Brahman. He will reach the fourth Step on the Yoga Path. From then on, he gradually firms up his contemplation on Brahman and climbs the higher and higher Steps. Thus he will get rid of the balance one fourth part of ignorance (i.e. the veiling power of ignorance).

[***Note:*** *The veiling power of ignorance obscures the True 'Thing'. The projecting power shows a multitude of illusory things in place of the True One Thing, Brahman.]*

When once ignorance is totally eradicated in this way, what remains will be nameless and formless. That is *sanmaya* state, Pure Beingness. To abide in That is the final goal of human pursuit.

(At this stage, Rama posed a question to Sage Vasishta who had been narrating the dialog between Vidhyadhara and Bhusunda)

Rama: Teacher! You have referred to *sanmaya* state. What is this state? Does not *sanmaya* imply a mix of *sat* and *asat?* What could be the *asat* part when once ignorance is totally annihilated?

Vasishta: The suffix '*mayat*' does not here imply what you mean. It is used in the sense that *sat* alone remains there. I used it in that sense only. Now let us continue to follow attentively what Bhusunda says.

Bhusunda: Vidhyadhara! We said that I-consciousness is the root cause for the origination of the world. You may wonder how space and time were generated. You may assume that unless we have the pillars of space and time, the structure called the world cannot stand. But that is not the truth. All the three - the world, space and time - emerge together simultaneously. Hence, time and space are not supports for the world. In order that you may understand this clearly, let me relate a short story to you.

7. Universe Lies At The Center Of A Subatomic Particle (The Story of Indra)

Once upon a time there was a massive Wish Fulfilling Tree in the womb of a subatomic particle. I hope you understand what I mean by Wish Fulfilling Tree. That is the tree that creates all kinds of objects! In other words it is the Creator with attributes (*saguna Brahma*) creating the illusory objects.

A fig fruit originated at the conjunction of two branches. That fruit is the world. Don't be surprised by a Wish Fulfilling Tree bearing a fig fruit. That is the beauty of this illusion!

The ensemble of impressions is the water for the tree. Experiencing happiness and sorrow are its fragrance. Its lifespan extends till the end of the Kalpa (see Glossary). The fruits of the tree are sometimes available to ravens and sometimes to cuckoos. Ravens are ignorant creatures. Cuckoos are the knowledgeable ones. At the center of the fig fruit was the Lord of Gods, Indra. He ruled the world with discernment which is obtained as a result of his own innate tendencies and the teachings of his Gurus.

As times went by, demons invaded that world. The principal Gods like Shiva and Vishnu happened to be away at that time. Consequently, Indra faced defeat and had to flee. He managed to escape from the enemy and hid himself in another subatomic particle.

त्रसरेणुं विवेश सः *trasareṇuṃ viveśa saḥ*

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 13, Sloka 18

Indra rested and meditated there for some days. He built a mansion with the power of his will. He entered the house and constructed a city around the house. He then expanded his kingdom around the city and began to rule it. He begot a son by name Kunda. Eventually he crowned Kunda and left his body.

A thousand Indras were born so far in this lineage. The present ruler is Anshak. The atomic particle which was the root support for the kingdom slipped away. In spite of that, the kingdom was secure.

One of the descendent Indras of that lineage obtained Self-Knowledge from the teachings of Brihaspati. He began to accept things as they happened. He performed a hundred rituals of Horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*). He fought wars. Sometimes he won; other times he was vanquished. Whatever might be the result, he was not distracted from his Knowledge of Truth.

At an opportune time one day, he tried to find out the truth about the illusory Brahma with attributes. From his effort he could decipher that the three worlds exist within the Supreme Consciousness. He realized that the three worlds assume a form during the times of creation and lose their form during the periods of dissolution.

In course of time, he awoke from his *Samadhi* (deep meditative state) due to the effect of the hundred rituals of horse sacrifice he performed. He ruled the country once again devoid of any attachments. He remained forever calm and peaceful having understood the essence of the illusory world. He realized that identification with I-consciousness (i.e. superimposition of I-consciousness on Brahman) to be the root cause for illusion. Hence, Vidhyadhara, listen.

यत्राहंत्वं जगत्तत्र पूर्वमागत्य तिष्ठति ।

yatrāhaṃtvaṃ jagattatra pūrvamāgatya tiṣṭhati |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 13, Sloka 18

Know that the world would be pre-existent at any place where I-consciousness exists.

Vidhyadhara: How could the world pre-exist I-consciousness?

Bhusunda: Everybody notices a world in his dream. Does anyone feel that it is a new world and he is seeing it for the first time? No! Hence I say that the world precedes I-consciousness. The proof of it lies in the fact that Lord Indra perceived a huge world sitting in the nucleus of an atom.

If truth be told, there is no difference between I-consciousness and the world. It is similar to the difference between the breeze and movement.

Hence the most important thing for a seeker is to totally wipe out I-consciousness. It can be achieved by a denial of I-consciousness based on the Knowledge of Truth. From an Absolute perspective, I-consciousness is like the horn of a hare (never existent).

I trust you have internalized the issue well by now. Remember this: even a void becomes a huge mountain in the process of superimposition; and, a vast universe becomes a void in the process of sublation.

Vasishta: Rama! Vidhyadhara entered into deep meditation (*samādhi)* while the sermon of Bhusunda was thus going on. Bhusunda tried several times to awaken him from *samādhi* but could not. The effect of teaching a purified mind will be like that. The message I give you is also the same.

नाहमित्यस्ति ते नान्तर्मैनं भावय शान्तये ।
एतावदुपदेशोक्तिः परमा नेतरास्ति हि ।।

nāhamityasti te nāntarmainaṃ bhāvaya śāntaye |
etāvadupadeśoktiḥ paramā netarāsti hi ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 16, Sloka 5

I-consciousness is non-existent. What exists is the Pure Consciousness Self.

Practice quietude of the mind if you yearn for everlasting tranquility. Do not perpetuate the imagination of a non-existent I-consciousness. This is our instruction. There is no higher teaching than this.

Rama, Sage Bhusunda recounted to me this lengthy story in response to my simple query whether anyone could achieve long life in spite of not having Self-Knowledge. I smiled within myself with surprise that Vidhyadhara who lived for four Kalpas could ultimately obtain an eternal lifespan only after he had attained Self-Realization. I took leave of Sage Bhusunda and headed to the abode of Vidhyadhara. I was convinced of the truth of Bhusunda's words when I met Vidhyadhara. Finally I returned to my hermitage.

When do you think all of this has happened? It took place eleven hundred Mahayugas (see Glossary) back within this Kalpa.

Another lesson we can draw from the story of Vidhyadhara is that with the destruction of I-consciousness, the world that yields merit and sin to us will also be destroyed. Only Self inquiry, through Listening to scriptures, Reflection on what is heard and so on, can help us in annihilating I-consciousness. The world will not be able to take genesis in a *jīvanmukta* in whom the I-consciousness has collapsed even though he has a body.

8. The External and Internal worlds

Vasishta: (Continuing) Laymen ignorant of this Truth are scared of death. They think that mind, intellect, I-consciousness etc. end completely with death. It is a mistake. I shall explain this now.

Let us suppose that someone is born as a human being owing to the pending balance of his residual current suffrage (*prārabdha*) of karma (effect of past actions). Depending on the type of happiness and sorrow that the individual will have to experience in that life, he will obtain appropriate body, temperament, attitude, environment and other things such that they would facilitate the specific type of experiencing. In course of time, the residual balance of allotted karma will get exhausted. A new quota of residual karma will be ready for him to go through. At this stage the individual will forget the modification in his mind that generated the I-consciousness over the present body. The mental modification jumps towards generating a new I-consciousness for the forthcoming body. Forgetting the older I-consciousness-modification-of-the-mind at such a time is called death. He just forgets the older mental modification and gets into a new one. But the modification of the mind per se is not lost. I described some time ago death as forgetfulness for this reason only.

Behold there! I can see such mental modifications of dead individuals floating with the wind in the sky like the Meru and Mandara Mountains.

Rama: Revered Teacher ! I don't see anything!

Vasishta: Okay, I do not mean that those are visible to the eye. You can see with your

mind's eye if you are able to understand. Wouldn't every individual travel in his subtle body to reach his new body after leaving the old gross body? Before he reaches the new body, his life-force or so to say, his subtle body will be moving in the sky.

There is a mind in that life-force. There are thoughts and counter thoughts in that mind. Meru and Mandira Mountains are also present in those thoughts. They (The Mountains) will be floating in the air along with the minds in order to go through the future experiences of that individual. I said only in this sense that the Meru, Mandara etc. Mountains are floating in the air above.

If you follow this logic, you will be amazed by the number of dead people and the multiplicity of worlds in their minds. It is truly incredible to think that some of them join together, some of them go apart without any contact and keep roaming around in the space near to us.

Rama! What is the difference between the world visible to the eye here and the worlds that are floating around in the air above? There is only one difference. You have developed a 'me and mine' claim on the external world that you perceive. Hence it looks to be real to you. You have no such 'me and mine' claims on the other worlds there. So you do not think that they are real. Don't you understand from this that it is nothing but your I-consciousness that is appearing as this world ? Therefore, I keep saying that if you get rid of the I-consciousness, the world will end with it.

Rama: Master! You talked about an external world and an internal as if there are two separate worlds. Which one is the empirical world of the individual and which one is the absolute one? What is the window through which he executes the transactions with the external world?

Vasishta: The omnipresent Consciousness had a thought. The thought was to create (multiply). It created the five fundamental elements to begin with. It entered into them Itself and became the individual (*jīva*). Chandogyopanishad discussed these matters in detail. Consciousness in the form of the individual acquired sensory organs like eye etc. and perceived form etc. through them. The individual capable of perceiving objects is known as a sentient being. This is the empirical form of the individual.

The main Consciousness on which sentience is based is the Absolute form. It is neither subtle nor gross. It is neither existing nor non-existing. What lies behind the multitude of objects in the world is That only. When It takes the form of an individual, It flows out through his senses, assumes the forms of all visible objects like a tree or a pot and illuminates them.

[**Note:** These matters were discussed in detail in Yoga Vasishta, Book 2, The Conduct Of A Spiritual Aspirant, Mumukshu Vyavahara Prakarana under the section: Working process of the sensory organs, in Book 2 of our Series.]

The doors to the outside world are the senses. Cognitive ability exits through

these openings and grasps what is perceived. It seemingly looks as if cognition is split because of the objects perceived. For example, the image (record) obtained from vision appears to be different from that obtained from the nose. However, all these images (records) are a single imagination only. The person who experiences these images is a separate entity. He arises from the composite individual called Hiranyagarbha. He is called "Virat. The entirety of creation forms his body.

The Lunar sphere is his symbol. It is from the Lunar sphere that the mind takes its form and enters into the heart of the individuated person.

चन्द्रमा मनोभूत्वा हृदयं प्राविशत *candramā manobhūtvā hṛdayaṃ prāviśat*

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

The Vedic statements as above establish this fact. Literally thousands of moons passed in the history of creation. So also thousands of Virats had gone by. It will go on like this in the future too.

The Composite Virat has the power of thought to materialize what he conceives. Because the separate individual beings emerged from him, there is no fundamental difference between him and the individual beings. The same 'beingness' is present within the composite and the individual persons. But the separate individual imagines a contracted and distinct 'me' within himself by himself. As a result of this imagination, he becomes bound. Hence, Rama, throw away the delimiting feeling of I-consciousness within you and be the Knower of the Truth enjoying eternal Bliss.

9. Knower of Truth and Expert on Truth

Vasishta: Rama! A man should not be an Expert on Truth but should be a Knower of Truth. In my opinion, it is better to be an ignorant person rather than being an Expert on Truth.

Rama: Sir! Who is a Knower of Truth and who is an Expert on Truth? Please explain clearly the relative advantages they get by knowing the Truth.

Vasishta: Rama!

व्याचष्टे यः पठति च शास्त्रं भोगाय शिल्पिवत् ।
यतते न त्वनुष्ठाने ज्ञानबन्धुः स उच्यते ।।

vyācaṣṭe yaḥ paṭhati ca śāstraṃ bhogāya śilpivat |
yatate na tvanuṣṭhāne jñānabandhuḥ sa ucyate ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 21, Sloka 3

A man may study spiritual scriptures for gainful employment just as another

may learn several of the worldly subjects like sculpture etc. Undoubtedly knowledgeable as he is, he may be able to explicate and analyze well what is Truth but hardly ever he would try to practice what he learnt. Such a person is the Expert on Truth. He is well acquainted with the subject of Knowledge of Truth.But his behavior and attitude do not, however, reveal any effect of his Knowledge. Just like the experts in other fields, he will be concerned about his name and income. He may feign to be a learned man but hardly does he care about Knowledge.

Let me tell you, the only true knowledge is the Knowledge of Truth. All other subjects of study are imaginary knowledge (unreal mirror reflections of Truth).

Rama: Do you mean to suggest that only a perfect Knower of Truth is truly knowledgeable and the rest of the seekers are lowly Experts on Truth?

Vasishta: Yes, Seekers are mere experts on Truth but they are not lowly. What I talked about was about the pretentious knowledgeable lot who never even aspire for liberation. It is such people who are the morons. They are the inferior ones who really qualify to be called as the Experts on Truth.

There is another type of Experts on Truth. They are the ones who studied all the scriptures well but struggle in practical implementation. They keep efforting sometimes successfully and sometimes with failure. They are the pious Experts on Truth. The term "Expert on Truth" connotes a different meaning in their case. It defines their condition to be strongly bound to knowledge. They will not remain as ignorant persons, though they may not be true Knowers of Truth either, because they are attached to Truth. Such people do not get afflicted by temptations of pleasure.

Hence, a seeker should be first a pious Expert on Truth.

अत्राहारार्थं कर्म कुर्यादनिन्द्यं
कुर्यादाहारं प्राणसंधारणार्थम् ।
प्राणाः संधार्यास्तत्त्वजिज्ञासनार्थं
तत्त्वं जिज्ञास्यं येन भूयो न दुःखम् ।।

atrāhārārthaṃ karma kuryādanindyaṃ
kuryādāhāraṃ prāṇasaṃdhāraṇārtham |
prāṇāḥ saṃdhāryāstattvajijñāsanārthaṃ
tattvaṃ jijñāsyaṃ yena bhūyo na duḥkham ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 21, Sloka 10

A seeker should undertake only untainted jobs to procure his food. He should consume just enough food to keep himself alive. He should live only to know the Truth. He should know only such Truth understanding of which will permanently redeem him from sorrow. Such a man will soon be the Knower of Truth. I shall narrate now the qualities of the Knower of Truth.

A Knower of Truth is one who

- Progressively ascends the steps on the Path of Knowledge successfully fulfilling the requirements at each of the steps; Finally abides himself firmly in Pure Brahman;
- Stays unconcerned towards gross and subtle things; and
- Is not troubled by the effects of past actions or in other words remains indifferent to the effects, having understood them to be unreal.

In the above definition, 'gross things' refer to the sensory percepts like sight, sound etc. Subtle thing refers to the 'inner organ' (*antah karana*) which flows outwards through the sensory organs and gets modified into the form of objects that are perceived. The effects of past actions are happiness and sorrow.

It is essential to be able to remain as a mere Witness-Consciousness in order to be able to reach the state of a Knower of Truth as per the above definition. Jada Bharata and others could remain unaffected even though their bodies were being hacked away because they remained as mute Witnesses.

Ignorance is the main impediment in the achievement of such a state. I-consciousness is the first trigger for the genesis of ignorance. Then it gets sustained through the belief in the reality of the visible world. The reality of the world gets reinforced from the cause – effect relationships like a seed turning into a sprout observed in the world. But these causal relationships do not exist at the beginning of the creation or at the end of creation. Nevertheless, common people believe that the world is real and develop feelings of 'me and mine' towards the world.

Or let us keep it simple. Everyone thinks "I am my body" and feels possessive about it. How did he get the body? It was in the form of a sperm in a male body. The individual (*jīva*) in it thought that that form in the sperm was himself. After it went into the womb of its mother, it became a zygote. Then it turned to be a globule. Later it grew to be a mass of flesh. It gradually attained the shape of a human being. After it was delivered, it developed the body that one is now. At every stage the individual (*jīva*) has been claiming whatever form he was in as himself. But if we say now that "you were a mass of flesh or just a globule or a mere zygote" he will not agree. That being the situation, what meaning can we give to the claim of ownership for the body now? Even then, the man is unable to let go the I-consciousness. That's what ignorance is!

Ignorance and consequently the phantasm of the world is the result of being an Expert on Truth. Freedom from this worldly phantasm is the outcome for a Knower of Truth. In order to achieve liberation, one has to practice detachment as was done by the best of Brahmins, Mr. Manki. He obtained JIvanmukti following my instructions after achieving renouncement. Let me recount the story of Mr. Manki for you.

10. The Story of Brahmin Manki

Vasishta: The Great King Aja, your Grandfather invoked me during his meditation one day. I was far away at that time. I had to undertake a long journey to meet your grandfather. I had to cross a forest on my way. The forest was totally uninhabited in some stretches. It was covered by snow in some places but was intolerably hot in other places. I found a traveler when I reached the hot part of the forest. He was unable to bear the extreme heat. He was looking for a hamlet with the hope to rest for a while.

I could see from his emaciated body that the traveler was an orthodox Brahmin who meticulously followed the obligatory rituals. I pitied his condition and addressed him as he was about to enter a tribal village.

Vasishta: Oh my Friend! You seem to be lost in this hot desert. You have taken the wrong path. You are heading towards an adversary place. Can you quench your thirst with salt water? The good villages are in the north-south direction. You left them all far behind. Why do you now enter this nasty hamlet? These tribes are very indiscriminate. They are not bothered by niceties. Killing strangers is a game for them.

The Traveler: (Who understood the inner meaning of Sage Vasishta's words as anticipated by the Sage): Oh Revered Sage! Who are you? Looking closely at you I can see that you are a very knowledgeable man. You appear to be in perfect bliss. These environs do not seem to affect you. I feel that you are capable of creating new worlds, if you so wish. But you do not seem to have any such intentions. It looks to me that you are hinting at something out of compassion for me.

My name is Manki. I am Brahmin. I belong to Shanidilya gotra. As you said, I did observe rituals of worship during the times of northern and southern precession. Even then I could not obtain peace. Unable to bear the misery, I went on a pilgrimage. I am on my way back but I do not feel like going home. I do not know where to go. I could meet with you in this condition of my predicament. Great men like you shower sympathy without any reason. Please do teach me the Knowledge of Truth. I spent considerable time in Self-inquiry. Still I am not free from sorrow. It now looks to me that one cannot understand the essence of Truth merely by one's own introspective search in the absence of an instruction from a Teacher. Please be my Guru and save me.

Vasishta: Dear Traveler! I am called Vasishta. Sky is my abode. King Aja invited me for a fire ritual. I am proceeding to his place. I met you on the way. I could immediately see that you are an accomplished seeker having achieved detachment. But tell me why do you want to forsake the world? What do you want to know? Please tell me in detail.

Rama! Brahmin Manki was so happy hearing my name. Tears welled up in his eyes. He bowed down at my feet. He described to me the lifeless world, the mean lives of the creatures living there, the misery that comes from the physical comforts and many other issues in depth. Finally he requested me as follows:

Brahmin Manki: Great Sage! Elders say that the infatuation with the phenomenal world ends the moment a capable pious Teacher is obtained. It is my fortune that I could meet with you. Kindly do instruct me the Truth that destroys my ignorance, infatuation and sorrow.

Vasishta: Manki! You described very well the destructive forces of this phenomenal world. You wish to get rid of them. If you want to be free of them, you should first know their root cause.

संवेदनं भावनं च वासना कलनेति च ।
अनर्थायेह शब्दार्थे विगतार्थो विजृम्भते ।।

saṃvedanaṃ bhāvanaṃ ca vāsanā kalaneti ca |
anarthāyeha śabdārthe vigatārtho vijṛmbhate ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 25, Sloka 1

There are four seeds that are the root cause:

1. Perception (*Samvedana*)— Perceiving the world with senses.
2. Reminiscence (*bhāvana*)— Repeatedly remembering the past events.
3. Impressions (*vāsana*)— Formation of mental impressions (innate tendencies as a result of the action in # 2).
4. Recapitualtion (*Kalana*)— Being haunted by the memories even at the time of death because of the impressions formed in # 3.

As you can see, the last two are caused by the first two. Hence perception and reminiscence are very important. We are helpless in doing anything with respect to the third and the fourth seeds. If at all we can arrest the processes, it can only be at the level of the first two seeds. That is the reason why people of discretion constantly remind themselves about the imperfection of the visible objects. They further keep remembering that they themselves are no different from Brahman. By virtue of these two actions, the rigor of perception (*samvedana*) will diminish in them. As a result the impressions and recapitulation too go down.

The ordinary folk are predominantly governed by their past impressions. It is these impressions and innate tendencies that form a veil from knowing Pure Consciousness. Because of these impressions the ordinary people imagine that there is no Supreme Consciousness apart from their senses and body etc. Such imagination constitutes ignorance. Ignorance is beginningless. Ignorance comes in two varieties. :

1. Denial of the existence (*asatvāpadakam*) - Ignorance that makes one to think that there is no Self
2. Denial of experiencing Self (*abhānāpadakam*) - Ignorance that makes one to think that he/she is unable to see Self

The two varieties of ignorance are powered by two Special Forces. They are:

1. Veiling Power (*Avarana Shakti*) - Concealment of theTrue substance from visibility.
2. Projection Power (*Vikshepa Shakti*) - Display of multiple non-existing things in place of the True substance.

If the Projection Power is dominant, ignorance is called illusion. If the veiling power is dominant, ignorance is still called ignorance or nescience.

Nescience and illusion together create the world and bondage. If one can eliminate both ignorance and illusion, the bondage with the world will be eliminated. What then remains will be Pure Self-Consciousness.

Abiding in this perspective, the world will appear as Consciousness only.

Brahmin Manki: Can we not take the world to be a mix of both inert and conscious stuff? When lac putty is stuck to wood, both may look alike. But do they become one and the same?

Vasishta: Though lac sticks to the wood, one can still separate it from the wood and examine it. But if we take away the Consciousness that is the substrate, you will not find any inert substance left. Breeze cannot exist in the absence of movement. Likewise inert material cannot exist if Consciousness is removed. We have to admit that all things perceived are Consciousness only.

When that is the case actually, an individual develops a sense of 'me' on certain things (like a body). He makes into the first person singular ("I") what should have been addressed in the second person ("you"). This I-consciousness is the bondage. The antidote for that is absence of I-consciousness. To put it differently, absence of I-consciousness is liberation.

One has to hold on strongly to the fact that the individual 'self' is not different from the Supreme Consciousness in order to be able to abolish I-consciousness. There are many proposed theories prevalent with regard to individual 'self.' Some argue that a unity has to be achieved between the sentient and the inert stuff though they are different. There are other suggestions too. But all such opinions of the people are an outcome of the innate tendencies carried by them from their past lives. The true path lies in the Vedas. So Manki, do not fall into the trap of such debates. If you are ensnared by them, there would be no escape from the phenomenal world.

Let me summarize what I said. The phenomenal world appears because of the conceptualization arising out of the past actions. You should understand the Truth through discrimination if you would like to get rid of the unwelcome imagination. Understanding the Truth does not mean merely listening to the scriptural teachings. All the desires solidified in your mind should melt away. Only then would the world disappear forever.

Rama! By my instruction thus, the consolidated infatuation in Manki's mind about the illusion evaporated right then and there. He lived peacefully, ever immersed in the Knowledge of Truth, performing only such deeds that befell on him as effects of his past actions. In another hundred years he entered into *Nirvikalpa samādhi* (see Glossary). Even today he lives like a statue on the top of a mountain. *samādhi* does not mean being insensitive like a stone. He will respond if you call him. Otherwise, he is unaware of the external world. That is his present state. Rama, you should also try to attain that state.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki covered the story of Brahmin Manki from the 23rd to the 26th Sarga. The matter presented above is a summary of those four Sargas.]

11. Does Triad (triputi) Apply in the Case of Self-Realization ?

Vasishta: Rama! Some people raise a question when we speak of Self-Realization. Their argument is as follows: Realization of Self is to witness the Self. When admittedly witnessing takes place, there is an implicit acceptance of the operation of triad. That is to say that there is a seer, a seen and the process of seeing (*triputi* of *drasta-drisya-darsana*). Because Advaita says that *triputi* is unreal, Self-Realization has also got to be unreal.

The above argument looks to be reasonable on the face of it. But there is a serious fault. The triad obtained in the phenomenal world differs from that of Self-Realization in a major way. Let us take for example the triad of Meditator-Meditated upon-Meditation. We are familiar with the way one observes things in the world. How does he do it? Does he see things that are really existent anywhere ? No. He imagines those things there and visualizes what he imagines. Therefore, in the case of the triad comprising Meditator-Meditated upon-Meditation, there is only an imagination (of meditation); there is no pramana (means of valid knowledge). There is no true substance. Hence the triad comprising Meditator etc. is regarded as not an outcome of either a **प्रमाण** *pramāṇa* or a real substance. It is entirely dependent on the desire of the meditator. So its origin is desire-dependent. We hold all these triads decidedly to be unreal.

Let us now consider the triad of Self-Realization. There is a True Substance and a *pramāna* for Realization. Hence this is an outcome of both a substance and *pramāna.* This triad is totally different from other triads. This triad cannot be falsified.

Please remember that Self-Realization cannot be untrue. On careful examination you can find that the entire world is nothing but mentation. Assimilate fully my instruction and live without the sense of I-consciousness. Never forget my instruction. Nor should you lose the sense of your True form. You have already realized Brahman. Let go of the polar pair of opposites like happiness and sorrow. It is your choice now whether you lead a life centered on deep meditation (*samādhi*) or centered on empirical worldly transactions taking things as they come.

[**Note:** Here ends Sarga 27.]

Rama: Revered Teacher! Some time ago you said that man was the seed and his actions (karma) were the shoots of that seed. You also said that these two were the externally visible causes and they worked along with some invisible cause creating the cycle of births and deaths. Will you please explicate it further?

Vasishta: Rama, you referred to two visible and one invisible cause. The invisible cause is also called Divinity, past karma or innate tendencies (*vāsanas*). In essence what you called the invisible cause was his action only. The individual (*jīva*) himself is essentially the basis for action. The individual is nothing but reflected Consciousness (**चिदाभास** *cidābhāsa*). The source for it is the Supreme Consciousness. This is the end point. The substratum for all these is the same if we examine from the position of Absolute Truth.

Hence we can treat all of them to be synonyms. Though there is no substantial difference amongst them, the reason for their appearance as diverse things is the impressions innate in the individual. Therefore, you should eradicate the impressions. The only key for that is Non-attachment.

Non-attachment is defined by some people as non-involvement of the mind whether a job is done or not. Some others say that non-attachment is to get rid of the innate tendencies. In fact both statements mean the same. The root for either of them is I-consciousness. Hence what you have to achieve is the absence of I-consciousness. Once you attain that, it is up to you to remain in *samādhi* or get involved with the empirical world.

[**Note:** Here ends Sarga 28.]

The best advice I can give is that you should abide internally in unswerving, resolute *samādhi* but get fully involved with the world externally. If you have to cry, do shed tears superficially but never let the sorrow touch you internally. Interact with ladies as any ignorant person would do but do not get aroused internally. Be cruel when you have to deal with enemies but be unaffected inside. Serve great saints without reservations but do not discriminate internally. You can carry out all actions on these lines. You will be permanently established in Pure Consciousness by being in a state of deep sleep internally though you may seemingly appear to be in the wakeful state in the world.

न च द्वैतं न चैवैक्यं जगदित्येव निश्चयी ।
परमामेहि विश्रान्तिमाकाशविशदाशयः ।।

na ca dvaitaṃ na caivaikyaṃ jagadityeva niścayī |
paramāmehi viśrāntimākāśaviśadāśayaḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 29, Sloka 26

You will live determined that there is neither duality nor non-duality in the world. It is a placid state like that of space. That is the highest tranquil position. May you attain it!

12. Establishing Identity After Canceling Out The Contradictory Elements (bhāga tyāga lakṣaṇa)

Rama: Teacher! You are one who attained such a state. But your ego shows up when you say "I am Vasishta" and "I am instructing my disciple." How can this be possible?

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta remained silent at this question. His face wore a strange look. Everyone in the assembly was astonished. No one dared even to stir. Half an hour passed thus. But Sage Vasishta did not utter a word. Finally Rama himself continued.]

Rama: Sir! How come you did not answer my query? Can there be a question that great men like you are unable to respond to?

Vasishta: Rama! I did not keep quiet because I do not have the answer. A question needs to be answered at the level of the questioner's capability to understand. You asked me similar questions in the past. You were at that time in a dualistic ignorant state. So I got down to your level, thought of good illustrations and responded to you appropriately. Now you are posing the question as a liberated man. So I have to answer you at that level. There is no scope here to formulate unreal scenarios as metaphors. One cannot use any logical formulations as they are all dualistic. What remains to be done then? Only Statue-like Silence (**काश्ट मौनम्** *kāśṭa maunam*). That's why I kept quiet.

Rama: Sir, we do have to admit some degree of compromise when we desire to express in words the inexplicable higher Truth. People overcome these inadequacies in serious debates on Truth taking recourse to the technique of "Establishing Identity After Canceling Out The Contradictory Elements (**भाग त्याग लक्षण** *bhāga tyāga lakṣaṇa*)." Please respond to my question using that method.

[**Note:** At this point the following verse occurs in the original Yoga Vasishta:

प्रतियोगिव्यवच्छेदिपूर्वकान्वद को भवान्

pratiyogivyavacchedipūrvakānvada ko bhavān

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 29, Sloka 42

Commentator Shri Ananda Bhodendra Saraswathi Swamiji (Shri ABS) interpreted the above verse using the technique of "Establishing Identity After Canceling Out The Contradictory Elements (**भाग त्याग लक्षण** *bhāga tyāga lakṣaṇa*)." This interpretation appears very appropriate to the context and hence we adopted the same process.

Instead of providing the definition for the technique of "Establishing Identity After Canceling out The Contradictory Elements (**भाग त्याग लक्षण** *bhāga tyāga lakṣaṇa*)" from a grammatical point of view, we shall explain it through an example.

Jim ran away from his house when he was a young boy. He was noticed again only after five or so decades. The elderly persons of the village identified him after a thorough scrutiny and decided "Yes, 'this was he'." Let us examine this sentence 'this was he.'

The sentence in brief means that 'this' man and 'he' were not two different persons but it was the same man.

But how could there be two separate words without there being two different individuals? Moreover, 'he' referred to the body of a ten year old boy with a tender face, shorter height and without beard or mustache. 'This' (man) refers to a sixty year old adult, much taller with a well grown beard and mustache. When what is indicated by the two words, 'this' and 'he' are two distinctly different people of size, shape and age, how does one relate them both to be the same?

Elders answer the above question on these lines:

If you leave out the attributes like tender face, shorter height etc. that were related to 'he', there still remains an individual (*jīva*) by name Jim. Similarly, if we leave out the attributes like height, beard and mustache etc. of 'this' man, what remains principally here also will be the individual, Jim. There are no two individuals (*jīvas*). There is only one individual. But 'he' looked like a ten year old boy at that time and now looks like 'this' man. Thus we can deduce that that boy who ran away from home is this man. Expressing concisely in a statement, we have to say that 'he was this man'. There is no other way to express it while using a language.

Normally when we give a meaning to a word, we ought to take all the qualifiers of that word. But in certain situations we need not take all the qualifiers. We have to leave out certain qualifiers. Otherwise, the sentence will not be meaningful. This happens all the time in the case of the figure of speech, synecdoche. A language gets often embellished for enriched expression by the techniques called "Figure of speech". "The canceling out of contradictory elements and establishing identity of the non-contradictory parts is called **भाग त्याग लक्षण** *bhāga tyāga lakṣaṇa*. The oneness that is pointed to (*lakṣaṇa*) is understood by 'giving up' (*tyāga*) the contradictory parts (*bhāga*)."

Unless we take recourse to *bhāga tyāga lakṣaṇa*, we cannot draw any meaningful conclusion out of the Vedantic Mahavakyas (Great Statements) like '*aham brahmasmi', 'tat tvam asi*' etc. In the statement '*tat tvam asi*', *tat* refers to omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Consciousness. '*tvam*' refers to contracted, delimited, impermanent consciousness. If we leave out the qualifying descriptors, what we have at both places is Consciousness. They are no two different Consciousnesses. There is only One Consciousness. But it is being expressed by two words. Thus do the Vedas convey in words to the ignorant people the inexplicable Truth resorting to the technique of "Establishing Identity After Canceling Out The Contradictory Elements (**भाग त्याग लक्षण** *bhāga tyāga lakṣaṇa*)."

Rama appealed to Sage Vasishta to utilize this technique and respond to his query in words instead with silence. Let us now take up Sage Vasishta's reply.]

Vasishta: (Smiling) Okay, let's do that!

I am Pure Infinite Consciousness. I am unaffected by phenomenal objects. You are also the same. Even then, I give these discourses for the benefit of dull heads with an assumed difference as 'me', Vasishta here and 'you', Rama there. This is definitely not for an exhibition of my scholarship.

What is important is to abide ceaselessly in a self-effulgent blissful state without any sense of agency for acting or experiencing and also without getting affected by happiness and sorrow while being indulgent in worldly affairs. And that itself is liberation !

13. The Happiness of Liberation and The Happiness of Object-dependent Experience

Rama: Why should we call the happiness from Liberation as self-luminous ? Why can't it be an experiential thing like the happiness from objects?

Vasishta: If a thing is to be experienced, I-consciousness has to exist prior to the experience. But liberation is obtained only after the eradication of I-consciousness. In view of the absence of an experiencer, it cannot be like experiencing an object.

Rama: Will a liberated man be able to witness the world or not? If he sees the world, there is no difference between an ordinary person and a liberated individual. If he is unable to sense the world, he will be equivalent to an insentient stone. If that is the case, we have to admit that stones have all been liberated. Will you comment on this please?

Vasishta: A liberated individual does see the world. But he does not look at it to be different from himself as does an ordinary person. The world appears to him as Brahman. Hence both the shortcomings that you mention do not hold.

Rama: If the world appears to him as Brahman, how can it be untrue then?

Vasishta: I never said that the substratum from which the liberated individual witnesses the world to be unreal. I said that the name and form superimposed on it were untrue. I also said that the first and foremost superimposition was I-consciousness. That, in fact, is nescience (ignorance).

[**Note:** Here ends Sarga 29. The next few Sargas deal with the teaching of Sage Vasishta addressed to either Rama or the other members of the assembly directly. There is no new issue related to the Truth that comes up in the teachings. So we shall provide here quick Sarga-wise summaries.]

Ignorance is the foremost obstacle for liberation. A seeker should weaken his ego (I-consciousness) with the strength gained from the Knowledge of Truth. With the diminishing I-consciousness, the illusion of differentiation will reduce. With fortitude the seeker should abandon his attachment towards the wife and kids, be focused on the Truth and attain liberation.

[**Note:** Here ends Sarga 30.]

14. Practice is A Must

Vasishta: Some say that the world will disappear with liberation. As a matter of fact, nothing is lost with the attainment of liberation. If the world were to be true, one could say that it would be lost. When it is not there truly, what is there to be lost?

Rama: If we accept that the world is untrue, why should we be cautioned about being enticed by the world or getting trapped by the senses ? Why to blame the world and senses?

Vasishta: That is true! There is no point. No one blames the 'flowers in the sky'. Nor does one give them up. The world is also like that. In spite of all that, the scriptures that ask you to renounce the world are not for nothing. The flowers in the sky do not trouble anybody. But the world ties one down in bondage. Hence comes the necessity of an exegesis on the characteristics of the world. The scriptures help in explaining the unreality of the world and to establish that the world is no more than flowers in the sky.

Summing up, we can say that the True substance exists eternally, the world is unreal and therefore, nothing new is gained or anything is lost from liberation.

For this reason it is advisable that one should proceed on the Sevenfold Path of Knowledge, improve upon Self-Knowledge, abandon I-consciousness and achieve Supreme Consciousness.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 31]

The first thing towards this end is to associate oneself with noble people and gain Self-Knowledge. One should also pursue Self-inquiry simultaneously.

कोऽहं कथमिदं दृश्यं को जीवः किं च जीवनम् ।
इति तत्त्वज्ञसंयोगाद्यावज्जीवं विचारयेत् ।।

ko'haṃ kathamidaṃ dṛśyaṃ ko jīvaḥ kiṃ ca jīvanam |
iti tattvajñasaṃyogādyāvajjīvaṃ vicārayet ||
Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 32, Sloka 18

Who am I? How did this visible world come about? Who is the individual (*jīva*)? What is it to be alive? One should introspectively think on such questions.

Rama: Revered Teacher! You advise that one should study under noble people and inquire introspectively. But elders speak in different voices. How am I to know who is a real Knower of Truth ?

Vasishta: Talk to different people. Each will present their own arguments. Each one tries to contradict the other. If you carefully and impartially examine their arguments, you will find out the most logical view.

Meet the concerned teacher alone and serve him. You gain strength in your Self-inquiry and you will be able to analyze on your own. This is the best way to achieve liberation.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 32.]

Mankind is afflicted by two horrendous maladies. The maladies are the present world and the next world. A man seeks pleasures in this and the next world. So he goes about making all efforts with the hope of obtaining happiness. The truth is that both worlds are wretched. So it is better to find a cure for the malady right here and now. The antidotes for this disease are Association with noble people, Abandonment of desire, gaining Self-Knowledge etc. These are present only in this world and are not available in the next world.

इहैव नरकव्याधेश्चिकित्सां न करोति यः ।
गत्वा निरौषधं स्थानं सरुजः किं करिष्यति ।।

ihaiva narakavyādheścikitsāṃ na karoti yaḥ |
gatvā nirauṣadhaṃ sthānaṃ sarujaḥ kiṃ kariṣyati ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 33, Sloka 14

If one who does not get treated right here for the disease called hell, what can he do after going to the next world ? How can a diseased person be benefited by going to a place where no medicines are available?

Rama: But people do prescribe medicines like austerities, pilgrimage, sacrificial rituals, donations, penance etc. for obtaining the higher worlds.

Vasishta: Yes, they provide only a temporary relief. They can never cure any disease permanently. There is only one remedy. And that is Self-Knowledge. The preparatory step to attain Self-Knowledge is detachment.

जीवितस्य यथा बाल्यं दृष्टं प्राथमकल्पिकम् ।
निर्वाणस्य तथा भोगसंत्यागो रागशान्तिदः ।।

jīvitasya yathā bālyaṃ dṛṣṭaṃ prāthamakalpikam |
nirvāṇasya tathā bhogasaṃtyāgo rāgaśāntidaḥ ||
Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 33, Sloka 23

Childhood is the first step for life. Likewise renouncement of enjoyment of luxuries preceded by giving up of desires is the first step for Nirvana.

Rama! May you abide firmly in Pure Infinite Consciousness taking refuge in such a detachment !

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 33.]

Rama: Sir, wouldn't the teaching of a Guru also be lost if one is totally detached? When the teaching is lost, what is the way left for Self-Knowledge?

Vasishta: Rama, we can remove only that which is not real. We never say that Brahman is unreal. Hence one cannot negate Brahman. Nor can we contradict the teachings of Brahman. When one attains Self-Consciousness, those teachings dissolve by themselves. Elders express it in another way too. Pure Consciousness is classified into two types – Modified and the Unmodified. The modified form is I-consciousness etc. The Pure Consciousness is the unmodified form. Now think it over yourself. See whichever is beneficial and hold on to that.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 34.]

Rama, we have said that the unmodified form is the Pure Brahman and you should abide in that. The modified form implies one which is perturbed. Perturbation is a change. World means change.

The principal point is that the same Infinite Thing exists as the world and also beyond the world (**निष्प्रपञ्च** *niṣprapañca*). Pay attention to the Infinite Thing. In other words, the entire world should be seen as beyond the world. Practice this view and be happy forever !

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 35.]

From the point of view of Truth, perception, anticipation and remembrance are no different from Consciousness Self.

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta gave new names for the present and future times as **रूपालोक** *rūpāloka* (Period of direct observation or Perception), **मनस्कार** *manaskāra* (Period of mental projection or Anticipation). He used these terms while narrating the Story of Gadhi in Yoga Vasishta, Book 5, Upasama Prakarana, , the Chapter on The Calm Down) — Book 5 in our Series).

रूपालोकमनस्कारतत्ताकालक्रियात्मकम् ।
कुम्भकारो घटमिव चेतो हन्ति करोति च ।।

rūpālokamanaskāratattākālakriyātmakam |
kumbhakāro ghaṭamiva ceto hanti karoti ca ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 48, Sloka 52

Meaning: Whatever is present now is perceived by the senses. This is the Present time. What will be in the future is anticipated by the mind by its projection. This is Future time. What was past is remembered by the mind by identifying itself with the past things/events. This is Past Time. We can thus talk of time three ways..

The Sage alludes here to what was taught in the 48th Sarga of Yoga Vasishta, Book 5, Upasama Prakarana, Chapter on The Calm Down]

Therefore, Rama, the present or future times have no reality in themselves. But they create problems because of your desires. There is no bondage if you clip desire. The heaps of impressions solidified in your mind are the source for desires. It does not matter if you experience happiness by any sense organ without the shadow of the impressions trailing. So you should abstain from desires and attain liberation.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 36.]

Rama: If everything is Brahman, even desire is Brahman. Why should then one abjure wanting?

Vasishta: It is true that desire too is Brahman. But the moment you have this awareness, no desires generate in you! After all, Brahman does not arise or set! All the prohibitory injunctions are meant for those who are not Self-realized. There are no mandatory stipulations for a Self-realized person. Let us look at it from the other side.

एतदेव ज्ञताचिह्नं यदिच्छास्वतितानवम् ।

etadeva jñatācihnaṃ yadicchāsvatitānavam |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 37, Sloka 32

A sure sign of Self-Realization is a noticeable reduction in desires. In the world view of an individual having desires there still exists an ignorant person.

Please consider, who experiences the illusory world? Only a 'person' experiences the illusory world. But the 'person' himself is illusory as he is a part of the world. So only a non-existing 'person' is deluded by the world! Thus the uncanny and weird thing in the illusion of the world is that there is no real one who truly experiences the phantasm of the world. In other words, the miasma takes place without any one really existing there. It is obvious from this that the world is non-existent in Truth.

Everything is Brahman in one view. Upending logic, we say nothing exists. Thus even desire is Brahman in one sense. Even then here is my view

तथापि श्रेयसे मन्ये नन्वनिच्छोदयं स्फुटम् ।।

tathāpi śreyase manye nanvanicchodayaṃ sphuṭam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 37, Sloka 49

Non-origination of desires is much better in order to attain the Bliss of Self.

Please consider this. What is desire? Self-Consciousness flowing outwards

through the sensory spheres is desire. But that is the mind. That is the world. Countering the outward flow is desirelessness. And that is nothing but liberation!

15. Can A Teacher Bequeath Liberation ?

Rama: Agreeing that the world is nothing but a phantasmagoria, can't we help a person to avoid the troubles in the world using some clues from the world itself?

Vasishta: No, that is not possible. Will any amount of hammering by us here break the mountains in the dream of another? Any clue, any method is a part of your imagination. Misery is a part of his imagination. The two imaginations cannot meet at the same place. Hence each man has to rid his sorrow on his own through Self-Knowledge.

Rama: If the world is a mere imagination, it cannot have any fixed shape or form. How could then various bodies etc. come into place?

Vasishta: You are right. Any imagination cannot have a fixed shape. But when it gets fixated in your mind, it may condense into a shape. For example water does not have a specific form; does it not become a solid on cooling down?

Rama: If Pure Consciousness creates a form within itself owing to imagination, has It not lost its purity?

Vasishta: Not necessarily. Suppose a man dreams of his death. Does it mean that he is dead? So the purity of the Supreme Consciousness is not affected by assuming a form. You may in fact find innumerable creations — several kinds of them together or some of them separately — within the Pure Consciousness. The creatures of a particular creation will not be able to witness the creatures of another creation. However, adept Yogis, if they wish, may be able to dissolve their world within the fundamental Consciousness responsible for their bodies and move on to a different creation by entering another mind using their thought power. Some of the Jnanis and yogis report such an experience.

[**Note:** We may infer that the inter-world travels of Leela and Saraswati described in the Story of Leela in Yoga Vasishta, Book 3, Utpatti Prakarana, Chapter on Creation were based on this principle.]

The experience of some Yogis also stands as evidence to the fact that the diverse creations experienced by different individuals are nothing but multiple projections of the same Creator, Brahma. It should, however, be borne in mind that the experience will not be the same for everyone. What an individual Yogi may experience varies depending on the stage and level he is in. Each Yogi's experience appears to be true for himself from his standpoint. That is the reason for the variety of theories that have emerged so far. From the perspective of the Absolute Consciousness, however, it is more appropriate to say that no difference exists between the Pure Consciousness and the world. Neither desire nor jealousy will ever arise once we are firmly established in this view. [**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 37.]

One may mistakenly view liberation to be no more than a Yogic

Accomplishment (Siddhi - see Glossary) like Anima, Garima etc. because liberation is said to be the unity with the subtle Brahman. Such a position is clearly wrong. The Yogic Accomplishments are obtained because of a desire to attain them. But unity with Brahman is achieved only after all the desires are annihilated. A person in whom desires are annihilated is like a lamp that is extinguished. The ideas of 'me or mine' do not arise at all in him.

You may wonder how I am able to teach you if there is no I-consciousness in me. If there is a sense of 'me and mine', I cannot be a Self-realized man. A Self-realized man (*jīvanmukta*) may live in one of the two states – Contemplating Brahman or not. The state of non-contemplation on Brahman contains traces of I-consciousness. Teaching can take place only in this state. Neither I-consciousness nor any transaction of Vasishta prevails in the Contemplative state. May you also obtain the formless Nirvana state by contemplating each atom in the universe to be Consciousness !

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि हंस्येषि तत्सर्वं शिवमव्ययम् ।।

yatkaroṣi yadaśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat |
yattapasyasi haṃsyeṣi tatsarvaṃ śivamavyayam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 38, Sloka 37

[**Note:** The above sloka is similar to the verse at IX – 27, Bhagavad-Gita.]

Whatever you may do, whatever you may consume, whichever you may sacrifice at the altar, whatever may be your donation, whatever may be the austerities performed, whatever is killed or whatever may have been gained by you, everything is indestructible Consciousness. Internalize this and be just as you are.

As far as life in the empirical transactional world is considered, there is nothing more joyful for a *jīvanmukta* than acting as per the scriptural stipulations. Hence, a JIvanmukta would align with the scriptural injunctions but would not exercise free will.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 38.]

The beauty of it is that a *jīvanmukta* acts as per the scriptural stipulations, though he does not consciously will to do so. (It is so because his earlier practices must have been in conformity with scriptures). In fact, even the scriptural injunctions are no less illusory from his viewpoint. They do not have any effect on him.

The public imagines that I am delivering a sermon here. That's their view. But I am least concerned by their perception. From my stance, no-thing is happening here. There's no Vasishta-body around. This body you see in front of you is a superimposition (illusory visualization by you) on the Supreme Brahman. The speech you hear too is like that.

The entire world that has come about owing to nescience slowly disintegrates as you progress on the Path of Knowledge. Neither you nor I will be there finally. Nor will this business of discourses go on. Only the Self-effulgence of the Supreme Brahman would be the remnant permeating everywhere.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 39.]

The strange thing is that one who is himself Brahman does not notice a world. A person within the world cannot notice Brahman. A *jīvanmukta* sees both. But as the *jīvanmukta* progresses further on the Path, he leaves out duality completely and merges in the ineffable Brahman.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 40.]

The natural state of every individual is his True form, i.e. the Knowledge that he is Brahman. Forgetfulness of that natural state is ignorance which is not his intrinsic characteristic. People who are ignorant are sucked into the drama of the three worlds. The mad drama ceases when they are back in their natural state.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 41.]

16. Meditation on Divinity as One's self

The key factor that engenders the world of drama is the mind. Oddly though, the mind in its pure state is nothing but the Consciousness. For example:

सेयं देवतैक्षत हन्ताहमिमास्तिस्रो देवता अनेन
जीवेनात्मनानुप्रविश्य नामरूपे व्याकरवाणीति ॥ ६.३.२॥

seyaṃ devataikṣata hantāhamimāstisro devatā anena
jīvenātmanānupraviśya nāmarūpe vyākaravāṇīti || 6.3.2||

Chandogyopanishad, 6-3-2

(Meaning: "I shall enter into the three Gods viz., Fire, Water and Earth assuming the form of an individual in each depending on the effects of the past actions and through them I shall show multiplicity of names and forms", thus did the God of Existence think).

We may infer from this that the multiplicity of names and forms comes about only after the thought wave of a separate 'me' (*jīva = an individual*) is generated. Then the multiplicity as 'me' and 'you', 'this' and 'that' etc. comes into being through names and forms. The delimiting adjunct that gives rise to the individual is the mind.

At the initial stage when the mind is the adjunct for the contraction, the mind could not have been affected by the modification or the separation emanating from the thought wave. Hence the mind by itself is free from the taint of multiplicity in its pure state. So it is no different from Consciousness.

If the individual wishes to attain the undifferentiated state, he has to surrender

to the Supreme Pure Consciousness through discrimination. “Surrender through discrimination” means attaining unity with the Supreme Consciousness.

Bondage will never come to an end if one worships Gods like Shiva, Vishnu or others conceiving them to be different from oneself contrary to what has been stated above.

अथ योन्यं देवतामुपासते अन्योसावन्योहमस्मीति
न स वेद यथा पसुरेव स देवानां

atha yonyaṃ devatāmupāsate anyosāvanyohamasmīti
na sa veda yathā pasureva sa devānāṃ

Whosoever invokes Gods and worships them thinking that they are different from himself is an ignorant person. He would just be a beast serving those Gods. Thus is the unequivocal declaration of the Vedas.

Therefore, Rama, keep discrimination as your primary tool, practice unity with the Supreme Self through non-difference, reject indirect mediated knowledge and be absorbed in immediate direct Self-Knowledge.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 42.]

Ignorant people run after experiences. Knowers of Truth are not tempted by experiential objects. Their behaviors are totally dissimilar.

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी ।
यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ।।

yā niśā sarvabhūtānāṃ tasyāṃ jāgarti saṃyamī |
yasyāṃ jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 43, Sloka 31

The essence of Truth is hidden to the ignorant people. It is like a dark night for them. But a Knower of Truth will always clearly see the Truth experientially. It will be as clear as the day. He is forever awake in it. Hence what is a dark night for an ignorant man is an ‘awake’ state for a Self-realized man. The world, full of perceptible objects, is the day visible for the ignorant. From the viewpoint of the Knower of Truth, it is nothing but a phantasmagoria. The world of objects is invisible like a thick dark night for the Self-realized man.

[**Note:** The above sloka appears as verse II – 69 in Bhagavad-Gita.]

We describe the perception of the Knower of Truth as the True perception because there is no way for ignorance to exist within the Supreme Self. Imaginary ignorance takes place only if the person is in ignorance.

[**Note:** This point is made abundantly clear in the commentary on Brahma Sutras called Brahma Sutravartika.

अविद्यास्ति त्यविद्यायामेवासित्वा प्रकल्प्यते
ब्रह्मदृष्ट्या त्वविद्येयं न कथञ्चन युज्यते

avidyāsti tyavidyāyāmevāsitvā prakalpyate
brahmadṛṣṭyā tvavidyeyaṃ na kathañcana yujyate

Brahmasutra Vartika

Meaning: Entrenched in nescience, individuals (*jIvas*) imagine that nescience is real. Taking the stance as the Absolute, it cannot be said that nescience is real or existent.]

Noble people, therefore, quieten down their ignorance, stay tranquil and abide in deep contemplation (*samādhi*).

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 43.]

17. Develop Detachment

Rama: Revered Teacher! *samādhi* is the state where the mind is calmed down. Will you please elaborate on how one acquires a placid mind?

Vasishta: Rama! A serene mind is described as *Samadhi*. It is also called as equipoise. It results from a high degree of detachment.

Different forms of triggers help in the development of detachment in different people. Detachment may come from an unbearable insult from an enemy. It could result from quarrels with relatives. Some lucky people may get it through the preaching of noble people. Or it may just take root sometimes without any reason. But the important point is that it is all the same however it may originate.

The detachment that has thus germinated should be nourished and nurtured by associating with noble people and studying authentic scriptures. If, instead, one indulges in enjoyment, the detachment that has taken root may wither away and die. Hence it is necessary that one should be vigilant not to lose detachment. The detachment that has germinated should be augmented by observing austerities of the body, mind and speech and also by practicing qualities like humility, unpretentiousness, non-injury, forbearance, uprightness etc.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki combined both these aspects and expressed in a cryptic way as follows:

तपःप्रकारदानेन पदार्थघटनेशितैः ।

tapaḥprakāradānena padārthaghaṭaneśitaiḥ |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 43, Sloka 31

The commentator, Shri ABS says that the complex word build up in the above verse needs to be explained in terms of austerities of the body, mind and speech and the practice of qualities like humility etc. Observation of austerities of the body, mind and speech are described in detail in the 14th to 16th verses of Chapter XVII in the Bhagavad-Gita. The slokas from 7 to 11 in the Chapter XIII of Gita talk about qualities like humility etc.]

Nurturing the detachment thus, it should be sustained through the practice of *mudita* (contentment) and *santośa* (happiness). *Mudita* is the quality of feeling contented meeting noble people and *santośa* refers to being happy and satiated with whatever is obtained.Even after one takes care to secure detachment observing the aforementioned means, impediments do rise from time to time in the form of attachment to wife, kids, family, wealth etc. One should drive away these with great care. Further, it is necessary to enhance the detachment through the good practices like self-control (*yama*), discipline (*niyama*) etc., breath-control, recitation of Aum and so on.

As you proceed thus, you will be able to meditate with focus. Discrimination arises from meditation. From discrimination come the virtues of studying scriptures and associating oneself with holy people. The pre-existing good qualities like courage, contentment, non-attachment etc. will also get strengthened.

स्फुटता सत्यता सत्ता धीरता निर्विकल्पता ।
समता शान्तता मैत्री करुणा कीर्तिरार्यता ।।

sphuṭatā satyatā sattā dhīratā nirvikalpatā |
samatā śāntatā maitrī karuṇā kīrtirāryatā ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 44, Sloka 23

Over time, your virtues will further improve and you will be immersed in meditation aided by the following desirable qualities:

i. Greater Clarity with regard to the Knowledge of Self.
ii. Conviction with regard to the Non-dual Truth.
iii. Identification of self with Truth.
iv. Unswerving stability with respect to Truth.
v. Be free of conceiving unreal objects like the horn of a hare or in other words, be free of illusion.
vi. Equanimity towards all creatures.
vii. Serenity of the mind.
viii. Friendship towards all.
ix. Compassion (being empathetic towards other's difficulties).

x. Inclination to take up virtuous deeds. And,
xi. Respectability.

Meditation and discrimination will gain further strength by mutually reinforcing each other. The mind of the seeker will calm down and lead him towards meditation. Eventually the mind will rest in meditation. The mind attains tranquility though it might have run after objective pleasures in the past with the meritorious acts of many past lives converging favorably. When the mind is stabilized thus, he will reap the happiness of liberation which was unknown to him thus far.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 44.]

18. Samādhi

Rama: After reaching the final stage on the Knowledge Path, making so much of effort, won't the mind come back to its original ways when dealing with the world like a bow springing back to its curved shape after the release of the arrow? The mind cannot but act in the empirical world.

Vasishta: No, no. You are mistaken. The mind does not behave like a bow. It is more like a Garland of Flowers. In whatever shape we may bend and keep it, it would stay that way only.

But, by the way, what is your idea of *samādhi* ?

द्रष्टृदृश्यैकतारूपः प्रत्ययो मनसो यदा ।
स तदेकसमाधाने तदा विश्राम्यति स्वयम् ।।

draṣṭṛdṛśyaikatārūpaḥ pratyayo manaso yadā |
sa tadekasamādhāne tadā viśrāmyati svayam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 44, Sloka 38

samādhi is the internalization by the mind of the Truth (Knowledge) that the observer (*drasta*) and the observed (*drisya*) are non-different. No sooner than this Truth is realized, the mind becomes tranquil within the Self. Such tranquility is possible only for one who discarded the three desires. This knowledge comes naturally to him.

[**Note:** Sage Patanjali calls such a mind as one-pointed mind (*samyama*). The relevant Yoga sutras of Patanjali are:

i. **देसबन्धस्चित्तस्य धारण** *desabandhascittasya dhāraṇa*

Dharana (Concentration) is to focus the mind on one thing.

ii. **तत्र प्रत्यैकतानता ध्यानम्** *tatra pratyaikatānatā dhyānam*

Dhyana (Meditation) is to keep the modification (vritti) of the mind focused on the target.

iii. **तदेवार्थमात्र निर्भासं स्वरूप सून्यमिव समाधिः**

tadevārthamātra nirbhāsaṃ svarūpa sūnyamiva samādhiḥ

Samadhi is the position when the meditator forgets himself and what remains is only the target of meditation.

iv. **त्रयमेकत्र संयमः** *trayamekatra saṃyamaḥ*

Samyama is the term used to express the condition when all the three viz. Concentration (dharana), Meditation (dhyana) and Samadhi happen together at the same time towards the same target and not separately.

The above four Sutras are the first four in the Vibhuti Pada of Patanjali Yoga Sutras.

Commentator, Shri ABS says that the *samādhi* mentioned in Yoga Vasishta matches exactly with the *samyama* of Patanjali Yoga Sutras.]

Rama, you seem to be under the impression that *samādhi* may be lost after a while in spite of the fact that a lot of effort has gone into obtaining it. Your effort has a meaning only till Pure Knowledge arises in you. Once the realization takes place, it will never be lost. You need not try again and again to get it. There is no end to the *samādhi* obtained by a Knower of Truth.

The fundamental prop for the entire process is the higher detachment. When once one is detached, Realization of Self and *samādhi* automatically follow without exception. Nobody can stop the process.

परं विषयवैतृष्ण्यं समाधानमुदाहृतम् ।
आहृतं येन तन्नूनं तस्मै नृब्रह्मणे नमः ।।

paraṃ viṣayavaitṛṣṇyaṃ samādhānamudāhṛtam |
āhṛtaṃ yena tannūnaṃ tasmai nṛbrahmaṇe namaḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 45, Sloka 46

People sometimes describe the higher detachment itself as *samādhi* for this reason.

Hence Rama, anyone yearning for liberation should cultivate detachment in a befitting manner, associate himself with noble people and study the scriptures. He should climb up the tree of Meditation with the help of those three and enjoy the fruits of the Bliss of the Self. [**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 45.]

With the immediate experiential understanding of the Truth of the Self, Knowledge, which is also called the Final modification of the mind, gets destroyed along with its constricting adjunct namely nescience.

nididhyāsa is the repeated recurrence of the mental modification in the form of whatever that remains as the residual 'Thing' after the rejection of all the imaginary unreal objects that were superimposed on the Self. As the *nididhyāsa* matures, the mind takes the Form of Infinite Brahman unceasingly (*akhanda brahmākāra citta vritti*). This is the Final modification of the mind. It is the last stage of attainment of the Self-Knowledge. In fact, even this is part of nescience! This too has to drop off at the stage of Perfect Dissolution in Brahman. Expressing in simple words,

ज्ञानाद्विषयवैरस्य स समाधिर्हि नेतरः

jñānādviṣayavairasya sa samādhirhi netaraḥ
Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 46, Sloka 17

samādhi is the highest detachment obtained from Knowledge. Any other definition is redundant. Meditation is useless without detachment. Meditation is meaningless with detachment. Utter detachment is the most fundamental thing of all for Nirvana.

श्रुतपाठजपान्तेषु समाधिनिरतो भवेत् ।
समाधिविरतः श्रान्तः श्रुतपाठजपाञ्छ्रयेत् ।।

śrutapāṭhajapānteṣu samādhinirato bhavet |
samādhiviratah śrāntaḥ śrutapāṭhajapāñchrayet ||
Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 46, Sloka 23

For a good practice of *samādhi*, study Vedas along with your teacher and co-students. Understand Upanishads by yourself. Recite Aum repeatedly. Conducting yourself thus, gently get into Samadhi. In case you feel tired and come out of Samadhi, take recourse to studying Vedas, reading Upanishads and recitation of Aum; but do not lose your focus. [**Note:** The above suggestion is well spelt out in the Skanda Purana.

जपश्रान्तः पुर्ध्ययेत ध्यान श्रान्तः पुनर्जपेत्
जपध्यानाभियुक्तस्य प्रसीदति परस्सिवः

japaśrāntaḥ purdhyayeta dhyāna śrāntaḥ punarjapet
japadhyānābhiyuktasya prasīdati parassivaḥ

This is a Sloka from Skanda Purana quoted by the Commentator, Shri ABS.

Meaning: Go on reciting your mantra repeatedly. If you feel tired with this, get

into meditation. If you are exhausted in meditation, take up recitation again. Siva will be experienced by one who takes refuge in the duo of recitation and meditation.

Here ends the Sarga 46.

The 47th Sarga deals with the ways of intensifying one's detachment. Sage Vasishta reviews in 56 verses in this Sarga the processes that have already been described.

With that ends the Sarga 47.]

19. Unwise Practices of Detachment

Vasishta: Rama! A seeker should not suddenly divest himself of his immediate obligations like wife, kids etc. simply because we speak of detachment and renunciation so highly. A traveler sometimes throws away useful things because of the heavy luggage and faces inconvenience later on. So also a seeker should not just desert his wife and children as long as he draws some support in spite of the fact that they could pose to be a little of obstacles in his own practices. Further,

यथाशक्ति यथाकालमुपचर्यन्त एव च

yathāśakti yathākālamupacaryanta eva ca

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 48, Sloka 4

A seeker should attend to the needs of his family as per the demands of the time. He may externally go through these motions but should not enjoy them at the mental level. Though immersed in the worldly dealings, he should constantly keep his eye open to meet a Knower of Brahman and yearn for direct experiential Knowledge of the Self. Such an individual will undoubtedly reach the highest state eventually. Individuation will fade away. He will attain stability in Consciousness (*sthita prajna*).

You should worship the Supreme Lord day and night in order to achieve such a state.

Rama: Who is this Supreme Lord that you are bringing in now?

Vasishta: He is not somewhere in a remote place. He is not impossible to get. Your Self is that Lord. The entire world is in his control.

नान्यतोस्ति द्रष्टा *nānyatosti draṣṭā*

Bruhadaranyaka Upanishad 5-7-23

None is there superior to Him in observing, in listening, in thinking or in experiencing – thus declared the Vedas. Worship the Lord of Self. He will be pleased and send an emissary to you.

Rama: Oh, Oh! What is that? How can the Lord of my Self send a representative to me? Who could possibly be that messenger?

Vasishta: Discretion is that envoy. The Supreme Lord teaches Self-Knowledge through him only to the seeker. The Lord becomes accessible through Self-Knowledge. Pranava is the name of the Lord so accessed. His form is that of Virat.

A seeker may worship this Lord. An opportunity to worship the Lord of Self comes only through the accumulated merit of serving one's own personal deity in several births and the conflation of the blessings of the deities.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 48.]

The innate tendencies (*vāsanās*) will be extinguished by worshipping the Lord of Self. The seeker will abide in Consciousness. An aura of magnanimity and kindliness will embellish his behavior. He will reach a position where he does not get tempted even by the best of heavenly comforts.

Such a position is also described as Annulment of impressions or Eradication of the Mind or The State of Null mind. This is the Seventh step on the Path of Knowledge. One does never fall from this step once he attains it. A man in that position lives in Turiya and hence the three states (awake, dream and deep sleep states) do not apply to him. People may find him to be awake externally; but he is forever absorbed in the Supreme Consciousness from his own position.

Rama: Instead of saying that the mind has totally dissolved, maybe it is better to say that there is a mind in the man absorbed in Self-Consciousness and Consciousness gets easily reflected in such a mind. Otherwise, how does Consciousness get reflected in the absence of a mind?

Vasishta: You see, we may say that Consciousness is masked when an individual (*jīva*) is in an inert state and that Consciousness is revealed once he gets rid of the inertness through the acquisition of Knowledge. If that were to be really the case, we would need a mind to be present for reflecting the Consciousness. But the actuality is NOT like that. An individual (*jīva*) is a form of Consciousness at all times and in all positions. Hence it is not necessary that there has to be a mind along with Consciousness, as you presume.

Rama: if an individual (*jīva*) is always a form of Consciousness, why does not everyone experience this?

Vasishta: It is so because the individual acquires the mind when he is in a state of ignorance. Being of a vacillating nature, the mind leaves its absolute form (as the Supreme Consciousness) and flows towards objects of the world. Hence the individual does not experience Consciousness.

Scriptural discourses and sermons, therefore, try to bring back the experience of Consciousness. The scriptures stipulate certain routines of exercises towards this end.

The ensemble of impressions from past births of the individual (*jīva*) becomes the mind. They posit on him the polar pairs of likes and dislikes, happiness and sorrow etc. Affected by these, he swings between the higher and the lower worlds. Fittingly, the ensemble of impressions is christened the **आतिवाहिक** *ātivāhika* body. '*ātivāhika*' is derived from '*āti vāhanam*' meaning something that plays as the horsey.

First of all, identify the *ativaahika* body. Recognize that it becomes his physical body and acts as the carrier for him. From this recognition dawns the clarity that the *ātivāhika* body is unreal. Then gently nudge it towards Consciousness. Utilize the Vedic aphorisms like 'that thou art' in this process. A seeker may perform the ritual of *viśvajit* for this purpose.

Rama: But, Sir, **विश्वजित्** *viśvajit* is a ritual performed by kings ! The ritual involves vanquishing all other kings by an emperor, giving away to the priests as alms the entire wealth so conquered by him including the clothes on his body and finally himself remaining as a destitute without any possessions. How can an ordinary seeker conduct such a grandiose ritual?

Vasishta: Oh, yes. Why not? Does not every individual extend his imagination to all four corners of the world and acquire a make-believe empire ?

ज्ञानवान्ज्ञानयज्ञस्थो ध्यानयूपं विरोपयन् ।
जगद्विजित्य जयति सर्वत्यागैकदक्षिणः ।।

jñānavānjñānayajñastho dhyānayūpaṃ viropayan |
jagadvijitya jayati sarvatyāgaikadakṣiṇaḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 49, Sloka 42

Possessed of the Knowledge of Truth, he should take refuge in the ritual of Knowledge. He should erect symbolically the **यूप** *yūpa* Flag post* of meditation, conquer the universe with the help of Knowledge and finally relinquish everything as alms. Such is the **विश्वजित्** *Viswajit* ritual and anyone can perform it.

[**Note: * यूप** *yūpa* Flag Post: As a part of the procedure of the Vedic sacrificial rituals, a Flag Post is erected. It is called the **यूप** *yūpa* Flag Post.]

Therefore, Rama, each seeker should observe this ritual with the strength gained from Knowledge of Truth. Great sadhaks freed from the fetters of impressions accomplish it very easily.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 49.]

20. Classification of Individuals (jīvas)

The men in the world can be classified into seven groups based on their ability to reinforce or annihilate their innate tendencies (*vāsanās*).

The Dream Awake people: Some people living somewhere in some universe at some period may be dreaming in their sleep. The current world that we are in now is their dream world. They are the Dream Awake People. That is to say that those people are seeing us in their dreams. We are their dream characters. The Creator Brahma is all pervading. So he can exist everywhere and at all times. Hence even if the dream happens to be that of some past period (Kalpa), the present individuals can be dream characters.

Rama: Revered Teacher! That doesn't seem to be possible. The people of that period (Kalpa) could have seen us in their dreams. But they are gone along with that period. They do not exist now. Even if we say that they are reborn and are seeing us now in their dreams, it is impossible for them to see the wakeful world of that time when they have woken up from their sleep. Hence, we cannot vouchsafe that they are the same people. How do you justify what you are saying?

Vasishta: Suppose the people of that period achieved liberation after attaining Self-Knowledge. Then there is no scope for your question. Suppose they are not liberated. They acquire a new body in the present time having lost the earlier body at the end of the previous period. But under the influence of the impressions that are carried forward by them, they dream of the same things as earlier.

You may recall the Story of Indava I narrated to you in the Third Chapter: Creation. Did not the ten Indavas create ten different imaginary worlds ? How could they do so ? They could do so under the power of their impressions. If the impressions are strong enough, any sort of creation can take place. That is in fact the reason for my saying that all things are at all places.

सर्वं सर्वत्र विद्यते । *sarvaṃ sarvatra vidyate |*

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 50, Sloka 9

The Indavas are an example for The Dream Awake People.

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta used here the word '*swapna*' not in its usual meaning of a dream but to convey the nature of the illusory world imagined by Indavas.]

Thought Awake People: Some of the people of past Kalpa might not have had any dreams but were totally under the control of The Day Dreaming. They will be under the grip of their mental imagination, lose their meditation and get attached to their thought world. They die in their thought world and are reborn. Such people will retain the memory that they are "thought generated."

They are known as the Thought Awake People. Sage *jīvata* mentioned in Yoga Vasishta, Book 6, Chapter on Nirvana Prakarana, Pūrvardha is an example for this

type of people.

Absolute Awake People: These are the people who were created first by the Brahma (Creator) of the current Kalpa. They obtain a body in the present Kalpa and stay free of dreams. Examples for this type of people are Dama, Vyala and Kata we talked about in the Chapter: The Calm Down.

Long-time Awake People: These are the people who take birth again and again and move about in the three states of awake, dream and deep sleep stages.

Solidified Awake People: Some of the Long-time Awake People acquire sins. As a result they will be born as immovable plants etc. They do not have imaginary dreams. (They will have normal dreams. But because one experiences happiness and sorrow in such dreams, these dreams are equivalent to a wakeful state). Therefore, they will be living in a variety of wakeful states all the time. Such people are the Solidified Awake People.

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta used the following expression here:

जाग्रत्सु घनतां गताः *jāgratsu ghanatāṃ gatāḥ*

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 50, Sloka 9

It means that the people had become dense in a variety of awake states. From this we may infer that even plants may dream like us. It is also possible that they dream themselves to be human beings.

The five varieties of the individuals described thus far are in 'bondage'. The Sage presents now the two types of liberated individuals.]

Awake Dreamers: Out of the Long-time Awake People, some people realize that the so-called awake state is equivalent to dream state from a study of the scriptures, by associating themselves with noble people and by knowing the ultimate Truth. They are the Awake Dreamers. Such people are usually found at the 4th, 5th and 6th Steps on the Sevenfold Knowledge Path.

Emancipated Awake People: These are the people who have transcended the three states of awake, dream and deep sleep worlds and abide themselves firmly in Supreme Consciousness. They belong to the final step on the Sevenfold Path of Knowledge. Though it is all one water it is classified into the seven oceans based on density etc. Similarly, people have been grouped into seven broad categories based on their nature. The purpose of this categorisation is only to show the strange effects that the past impressions can produce. Appreciate fully this principle, transcend emptiness and fullness, duality and non-duality and firmly establish yourself in Supreme Consciousness! [**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 50.]

Rama: Teacher, you mentioned that a few individuals would take birth directly from Brahma and get a physical body and they would be free from dreams. You said that

they were the Absolute Awake People.

The Supreme Brahman is like pure space. Individuals are like trees. Can pure space give birth to plants? How are the Absolute Awake People born?

You may say that they were born because of the effects of their past desires and actions. But such effects cannot preexist in a Brahma. These can come only after Brahma becomes (thinks to be) an individual. What is the causal factor for the birth of Absolute Awake People?

Vasishta: Rama, your question is old wine in a new bottle. You formulated the same old doubt of yours using new terminology. We speak of the birth of the Absolute Awake People only at a notional level. These people would indeed need a different causal factor other than the space like Brahma for birth to take place, if they have true beingness. But that is not correct. Let me explain it further.

The birth of Absolute Awake People can be explained only in one way. We imagine up front words like sentience and insentience and attribute some meaning to those words. We stick these attributes to Brahma who is otherwise free of any such qualities. Later on through skilful argument, we show that such a thing is impossible to take place and thereby we establish that neither an individual nor a world has been ever generated. We make the initial assumption of birth only to lead us finally towards non-origination of anything. There is no other way.

21. Different Viewpoints With Respect To The World

Rama: Revered Teacher! Though what you say is true, we still see various human beings in the world. They are infatuated by the existing world. There has to be a creator for the body-mind-intellect (BMI) complex of these people. There has to be an illusionist who creates enthrallment by binding the individual (*jīva*) with the polar pairs of likes and dislikes etc. through the help of the sensory organs. No work gets done in the absence of an agent for action. Hence it looks that there has to be an illusionist and an experiencer of illusion apart from the Supreme Brahman. The illusionist could be Ishwar and the experiencer of illusion could be the individual. These two have to be different from Brahma. But you seem to say that there is nothing other than Brahma. How can that be?

Vasishta: Well, well! What do the scriptures say ?

वाचारम्भणं विकारो नामधेयं *vācārambhaṇaṃ vikāro nāmadheyaṃ*

Chandogya Upanishad 6-4-i

Change is just a word, a new name. That is all!

As per the principle you enunciated a while ago, there cannot be an effect without a cause. Trees do not grow in the sky. In the same way, there is absolutely no scope for an individual or Ishwar to take birth from Brahman. Thus from the Vedas and also from pure logical thinking, we can understand that the creation of the bodies, mind etc., the idea of an illusionist and an experiencer of illusion are all unreal.

That being the declaration of the Vedas and what can logically be deduced, how can you invoke a distinct agent of action? You do not have to invent an extraneous agent to justify the imagination of a snake in a rope. Similarly, it is not necessary to find an agent for the creation of the individuals and the world and a different agent for their sustenance. The Immutable Supreme Brahman can manage this through superimposition, without Himself having to go through any change.

What you have to clearly understand with respect to the world is that from the stance of the Absolute Brahman, the world is never born at all. From the position of the individual, it seems to be born or in other words, the world has an unreal existence. When the individual gets enlightened by True Knowledge, the world loses its form.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 51.]

Rama: Respected Sir! You say that the unchanging substratum which is Brahman appears as the world. Will you please explain once again the process by which this happens? Maybe then my dualising mind would calm down.

Vasishta: Okay. I shall do so, but listen to me with utter care. Do not interrupt me in between. At the end of my presentation, you will clearly see by yourself that the world is unreal and non-existent. Let us begin with the assumption for the time being that the visible world is real.

We said that the world is a superimposition on Brahman. It is called the Doctrine of Vision-based Creation (**दृष्टि श्रिष्टि वाद** *dṛṣṭi śriṣṭi vāda*). Some people accept part of this argument and say that because Brahman appears as the world, the world is Brahman on the analogy that it is all the same whether you refer to the tree or to a branch of the tree.

Say, you made some coins out of a gold nugget. It is quite acceptable to state that all the coins so made are gold; but it is not proper to say that the gold nugget is the coins. There are several arguments and counter arguments that are prevalent debating the subtle intricacies of these postulates. But let us not concern ourselves now with those controversies.

We notice the quality of part consciousness and part inertness in all the things in the world. The inert component is responsible for the time dependent change, decay and destruction. We don't see at all a change in the consciousness part. So we can conclude from this that the final residuum will be the Supreme Consciousness, without a second, once the inert component is destroyed. I shall explain this once again. Please follow attentively.

The entire visible world including mind, intellect, actions, Ishwar etc. disappear at the final ending of the Great Period (**महा कल्प** *mahā kalpa*), i.e. at the time of Great Dissolution (*maha pralaya*). Space and time also become extinct at that position.

The immutable substrate Brahman only will remain. It is not time, space, the five fundamental elements or any other thing. We cannot describe or define what It is. Only Knowers of Self can understand It. The rest of the folk have to take recourse to Vedic aphorisms to talk about it.

Space, time, fundamental elements and other things are potentially present in It in the form of innate tendencies (*vāsanās*). A log of wood contains potentially all shapes of idols in it. A sculptor carves out with his tools certain shapes out of the log. The idols that stand out do not have any separate beingness other than that of the log of wood. It is a mere fantasy to think that the idols have a separate existence if you critically inquire into it. In the same way, you may see a number of worlds, but they do not have an independent beingness of their own. Also note that the supreme Brahman is unattached to any of them. The Supreme Brahman is ageless and immortal.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 52.

It was shown towards the end of Yoga Vasishta, Book 6, Nirvana Prakarana, pūrvārdha, the Chapter on Liberation that Rama entered into deep *samādhi*. Sage Viswamitra and others requested Sage Vasishta that Rama's *samādhi* should be interrupted and he should be brought back into the empirical world. Yoga Vasishta, opened the next chapter with providing a justification for such an action.

The discourse then proceeded to explain the various methods of attaining *samādhi,* different stages in *samādhi* and a classification of the Seekers. The short stories of Vidhyadhara and Brahmin Manki were narrated in that context. The most noteworthy point that stands out in this chapter thus far is that Sage Vasishta's discourse and explanations are centered on one issue: Consciousness is All.

Sage Vasishta takes up the Story of Hard Rock to establish that not only the Four Elements but also space and time are Consciousness. The story line in Hard Rock is quite small but the sage manages to stretch it to 40 Sargas. The actual story begins in the 56th Sarga. Before he gets into the story, he gives an extended prologue in three Sargas 53 - 55.

The 53rd Sarga opens with an intricate question by Rama.]

22. Consciousness Is All

Rama: Honorable Teacher! There is a peculiar 'object' quality (perceivability) in all the things that are perceived in the world (things sensed and remembered). There is 'timeness' in time; there is 'spaceness' in space; and, there is 'inertness' in inert things. Wind has mobility though it is an inert substance. It also has the quality of 'windness.'

If you look into time, we find that the past and future break away without any support but the present stands out conspicuously. The Present does not have a form or a pulsation. Nor can you say that they are not there for sure. It has a present-ness to it. There is a shape in the things that have a form. They are distinct from one another. Distinguishable things like space have infinite-ness in them. Things like space are invisible. But other objects are visible. Some can be clearly seen to be born. Creation has creation-ness in it. What are the characteristics seen within all these from perceivability to creation-ness? How are these characteristics acquired and where from?

Vasishta: Rama, the fundamental form of all the things you have been speaking about is the same. It is the Great Consciousness-Space. At the time of Great Dissolution (when even the trinity of Gods (Brahma-Vishnu-Iswar) has melted away and when all the differences because of names and forms have disappeared), what remains is only the Ultra Pure Consciousness-Self.

Rama: Why can't we say that The Consciousness-Self too vanished at that time? What is the harm in saying so?

Vasishta: If it were to be so, creation cannot once again take place after The Great Dissolution. But we see creation happening again. Hence we cannot say that the Pure Consciousness-Self had disappeared. We are able to observe the beingness of Consciousness-Self only when It is admixed with the stain of impressions (*vasanas*) which are the carry-over effects of past actions. Once the impressions are annihilated totally, there is no scope to say that It exists.

Rama: If we cannot say that It exists, we may as well say that It is'nt.

Vasishta: No, we cannot say that either. Let me tell you why.

Say, we would like to show the moon in the sky to a child. We would first point our finger to the top branch of a tree and ask him to see the moon in that direction. The child will see the branch of the tree first and then immediately notice the moon. What actually happened here? The Consciousness in the inner organ (*antah karana*) of the observer, i.e. the cognizer-consciousness, travels through his eyes to the branch of the tree and from there to the moon. First the branch and later the moon are the objects supporting the consciousness. There is no support for the thousands of kilometers of distance between the tip of the branch and the moon. We don't have an obvious reason to think that consciousness exists in-between. Can we, because of this, for sure rule out the existence of consciousness in-between?

Or say, a Yogi slept until midnight. He fully woke up from sleep and later went into *samādhi* in a sitting posture. Such Yogis experience object-less Consciousness. Can we deny their experience?

There are a variety of plants all around. Consciousness manifests in multiple forms at every place the plants germinate. Still Consciousness is one and the same at all places.

Can we not conclude from all the above examples that there is Common Beingness behind all these things?

[**Note:** Common Beingness was discussed in Yoga vasishta, Book 5, Upasama Prakarana, the Chapter on The Calm Down at the Sarga 54.]

Rama: Suppose all these have originated from emptiness!

Vasishta: Do you mean to suggest that emptiness is the cause of the world? Emptiness lacks space time divisions. Consequently no set of laws can stipulate the genesis of a specific substance at a specific place and every substance has to originate at every place.

Rama: Even the Supreme Brahman you propose is of the same type. Hence even with Brahman, everything has to take birth everywhere!

Vasishta: Yes. However, there are only two ways for something to originate. One is by modification and the other is by superimposition. Brahman is without a form. Hence, no objects with a shape can originate during the process of creation from Brahman. So it is our stand that the creation has taken place through superimposition.

Rama: We can as well say that superimposition has taken place on emptiness?

Vasishta: Superimposition is a function of imagination. A real substance must provide a substrate for the imagination to take place. You do not find anywhere in the world something being imagined superimposed on a void. Therefore, we are left with no alternative other than admitting that the superimposition has taken place on the Supreme Brahman. That is the reason why I said that the Supreme Consciousness-Self is the answer to all your questions.

The Vedas too express the same thing in different ways. For example:

तदेतद्ब्रह्म - अपॊर्वमनपरम् - अनन्तरमबाह्यम् - अयमात्माब्रह्म - सर्वानुभूह्

tadetadbrahma - apa◌ॊrvamanaparam - anantaramabāhyam - ayamātmābrahma - sarvānubhūh

Bruhadarnyakopanishad 4-5-19

(Meaning: This Brahman is That. It is uncaused. There is no effect. There is neither an inside nor an outside. The individual experiencing everything is Brahman).

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते। पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥

ॐpūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidaṃ pūrṇātpūrṇamudacyate|pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate|| ॐ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ||

Shantipatha, Sukla Yajurveda

(Meaning: The invisible Higher world is Perfection (Infiniteness). This visible world too is Perfection (Infiniteness). From Perfection arises Perfection (Infiniteness). If Perfection (Infiniteness) is removed from such Perfection (Infiniteness), only Perfection (Infiniteness) remains).

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 53.]

It is, therefore, our stand that there is no separate thing called the world; what Truly exists is the Supreme Brahman.

Look at it this way.

You are there before you go to bed. You fell asleep. You had a dream. There is another 'you' in the dream. That means, 'you' came out of yourself only. Could that be possible? Obviously not. But an impossible thing had happened. How did that happen? It is because of the concealing of sleep.

No sooner 'you' became separate from you, a new world has enveloped the new 'you'. That is the dream world. Where does the dream world originate? Even the dream world has come from you. Or putting it in different words, the dream world is another form of you only. That being so, what is the difference between the dream 'you' and the dream world? None, whatsoever!

In spite of that, the dream 'you' thinks that he and the dream world in which he crops up are different. Such thinking is utterly incorrect! In the same manner, it is equally and totally incorrect to hold that "I am different from the world that surrounds me" even in the wakeful state.

Just as you were existent uncontaminated with any relationship with the dream world and dream 'you' before the commencement of the dream, the Supreme Brahman too exists pure and uncontaminated by any relationship with the world prior to its creation. Brahman alone seemingly emerges as an individual and a separate world under the veiling power of nescience.Hence Brahman, individuals and the world are NOT different from one another from the absolute point of view.

Rama: Sir, what is the reason to say that Pure Consciousness appears as the world? Just as a huge fig tree is latently present within its seed, why can't we say that the world existed in a seed form within the Supreme Brahman and later on it emerged something like the tree does?

Vasishta: However small a fig seed may be, it has a definite shape. The latently concealed minute fig tree in the seed is revealed when soil particles, water molecules and other external enabling factors are favorable to it. But there is neither a shape like that of a seed nor any complementary enablers other than Itself in the case of Supreme Brahman. Therefore, your argument cannot be sustained.

Rama: The Supreme Brahman is described in the Vedas sometimes as atomic, as linear, vast and ancient. In some other places Brahman is depicted as minuter than an atomic particle. From this we may deduce that Brahman has form like that of an atomic particle. As far as other enabling factors are concerned, we may perhaps suppose that the atomic particle-like Supreme Brahman has got in its womb some unusual powers to germinate the world without any external help.

Vasishta: Rama, in the very sentences in Vedas where Brahman is described as atomic, it is also stated that Brahman is very vast. Where Brahman is portrayed as smaller than an atomic particle, it is also said to be much bigger than the biggest things. So it cannot be said that Brahman has the form of an atom.

Even if you fancy that way, to say that the immense world is contained within

the atomic size Brahman will amount to say that the Himalayas are within the mustard seed. This does not sound logical at all. Nor any other collaborative evidence is available.

From the above, we can conclude that it is not possible to postulate that the world evolved from the Supreme Brahman like a tree. Therefore, we have to admit that the world is generated by superimposition only. If we agree to this, it is a tacit acceptance of the fact that the world is nothing but 'beingness.' That precisely is our stand too.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 54.]

The sum and substance of my lengthy presentation is that Pure Brahman looks at Itself as separate from Itself by imaginary thinking because of ignorance. If It contemplates on Itself in this state, the separation will vanish and It alone remains. This is liberation. [**Note:** Here ends the Sargas 55.]

23. The story of Hard Rock

सर्वत्र सर्वदा सर्वमस्तीति प्रतिपादने ।
पाषाणाख्यानदृष्टान्तो मयायं तव कथ्यते ।।

sarvatra sarvadā sarvamastīti pratipādane |
pāṣāṇākhyānadṛṣṭānto mayāyaṃ tava kathyate ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 58, Sloka 4

Consciousness is everything; Consciousness is everywhere. In order to attest this fact, I shall relate the story of Hard Rock to you.

In the days past when I newly realized the Self, I often wished to be immersed in deep *samādhi* letting go of all the worries in the world. So I searched for an isolated spot suitable for meditation. I reconnoitered many mountain peaks, valleys, oceans and even different spheres in the winds in the sky. I did not find any to my taste. I travelled far far away in space, located a lonely place and erected a small hutment with the power of my thoughts. I went into deep meditation in the hutment with a desire to remain so for at least a hundred years.

On the completion of the hundred years, unknown to me, the seed to wake me up began to sprout in my mind. My organs too resumed functionality and I came out of deep meditation. Soon the devil of Ego along with the lady Desire seized me completely. I could not comprehend from where or how the ego had come.

[**Note:** Here ends Sarga 56.]

Rama: Sir, you said that you were already enlightened by then. How can the ego take hold of a liberated man?

Vasishta: A physical body cannot be sustained in the absence of an ego whether it is a

liberated individual or an ignorant person. No super structure can stand without support. The point to be noted, however, is that the I-consciousness troubles an ignorant person but is harmless to a liberated individual. For a liberated man like me, the experiential feeling is the same when I let go of the ego in deep meditation or when I accept it in the wakeful state for transacting in the empirical world. It is a distinguishing trait of the liberated individual.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 57.]

Rama: Sir, you began The Story of Hard Rock to establish the fact that everything is ever-existent everywhere. But this maxim has not appeared anywhere in your story!

Vasishta: No. I did not begin the story to say that the Supreme Brahman is like a Hard Rock. My intention was to show through this story that Consciousness-Space exists inside of even the hardest stone and that several thousands of worlds arise within the Consciousness-Space. When it is possible for worlds to be present inside a hard rock, is there a need to specifically state that worlds can exist within plants, ants and anthills, or the atoms of the five great elements (*pancha bhutās*)?

Rama: Sir, your theory is that worlds can be imagined by superimposition even in the wall in front of us because the wall also contains Consciousness-Space. That being your thesis, why do you have to talk about the stones, trees, ants and anthills? You can as well put it that the superimposition of the worlds takes place in Pure Consciousness-Space. Why don't you directly say so?

Vasishta: Precisely. You have taken the words out of my mouth. Normally it is a bit difficult to comprehend Pure Consciousness-Space straight away. As a first step, I began talking about the constraining objects of Consciousness-Space (i.e. substances which are the adjuncts that contract Consciousness-Space) and pointed out that creation takes place in all of them. I shall carry this sequence right up to Hiranyagarha. Because Hirnayagarbha has Consciousness-Space as his substrate, I shall prove that the series of superimpositions that have occurred thus far are no different from the substratum Consciousness. From this presentation, it becomes obvious that the creation of the world is itself Pure Consciousness from one angle and nothing but non-existent imagination from another perspective. In other words, "is – not is" are just a pair of words indicative of the difference in viewpoint and these words do not have a meaning in an absolute sense. That was what, in short, I wished to convey.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 58.]

Rama: I could follow so far. But please tell us what happened when you got up from the *samādhi* after a hundred years.

Vasishta: As I arose from *samādhi*, I heard a vague feminine voice. I came so far away from habitable worlds to a place inaccessible for any living creatures. Therefore, I was surprised to hear that melodious sound from another human being. I searched around but could not locate anybody.

I used my Yogic powers to see Consciousness-Space and searched for the

fundamental element of space. I could not find any one there even. So I positioned myself in the lotus pose and exercised control over my mind. I let go of the external things first. Next I gave up the thoughts in my mind. Gradually I proceeded to control the mind and intellect. I fused with the Consciousness-Space. Then I became the fundamental substratum of all things. I investigated various worlds in that state. I found a variety of strange worlds and witnessed amazing events.

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta provided a graphic description of many astonishing features of several creations in the 59th and 60th Sargas. A similar account appeared in Yoga Vasishta, Book 6, Nirvana Prakarana, pūrvārdham, Chapter on Liberation under the Story of Bhusunda. In response to the question by Sage Vasishta, Bhusunda narrated over thirty extraordinary events. He talked of the varieties of creations made by different Brahmas, the differences between various Kalpas etc.

Sage Vasishta too gives an analogous description. The sage added detailed comments on the principles that lay behind diverse theories of creation, modes of the veiling power of Brahman and things like that in order to bring in novelty to what had been already covered earlier. For example:

Some pundits count five veiling powers in the creation based on the quintuplication of the fundamental five elements. If one adds the non-quintuplicated five elements also, the veiling powers would be ten. This is the view of some other experts. According to the view of Sankhyas, the five *tanmatras* and Prakriti (Nature) containing I-consciousness and *mahat* have to be added to the above ten, thus making up sixteen veiling powers. In the opinions of some others, there are twenty four veiling powers. Yet others think there are thirty six. Sage Vasishta declared that he could find as many veiling powers as each theory held when viewed from the standpoint of that particular theory.

Speaking about Kalpas, he said that he witnessed 72 Treta yugas, 72 Sri Ramas, and 72 Sage Vasishtas. He said that in some creations eyes had the capacity only for night vision and were blind during the day time. He claimed to have seen worlds where sinners went to Heaven.

While thus describing, Sage Vasishta time and again took care to point out that these were all purely fictitious unrealities woven by the mind and there was neither any rule nor rhyme for such illusory fabrications. We shall leave this matter here and proceed with the main story.

24. The Story of Vidhyadhari

Vasishta: As I went on and on searching for the female voice in different worlds, the sound was audible more loudly at one place. Somebody was singing there adoring me. The song ran as follows:

अवलम्बनतटविटपिन मभिनौमि भवन्तमेव मुने ।।

asaducitariktacetanasaṃsṛtisariti pramuhyamānānām |
avalambanataṭaviṭapina mabhinaumi bhavantameva mune ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 60, Sloka 9

(Meaning: Oh, Great Sage whose mind is not at all affected by the defects that arise from likes and dislikes which are common to plebs! You are like a stable tree of succor on the river bank to the creatures entrapped in illusion and drifting away in the phantasm of the fluvial world. I salute you!).

I moved forward for quite some distance in the direction of that song. Finally I saw an attractive girl resembling Goddess Lakshmi. As soon as she saw me, she came to me with a smile and stood before me. She sang the same song once again. I watched her and her singing for some time. I felt that I had nothing to do with ladies. I deliberated in my mind over the illusory dualism in the world, I felt that I should not concern myself with that girl and proceeded on my journey through different worlds.

As time went by, I reached the following conclusion:

चिति सर्वं चितः सर्वं चित्सर्वं सर्वतश्च चित् ।
चित्सत्सर्वात्मिकेत्येतद्दृष्टं तत्र मयाखिलम् ।।

citi sarvaṃ citaḥ sarvaṃ citsarvaṃ sarvataśca cit |
citsatsarvātmiketyetaddṛṣṭaṃ tatra mayākhilam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 60, Sloka 23

The multitude of worlds arises in Consciousness. Consciousness is the source for them all. The worlds are Consciousness. Consciousness permeates all quarters. Consciousness is nothing but pure Beingness.It is everything. I had a direct realization of it.

Later I wandered through many worlds in the skies. Once again the very same Truth became apparent to me.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 60.]

Rama: Revered Sir, if everything is Consciousness, we have to admit that the Supreme Brahman who is Consciousness appears as the individual in the world and that that individual gets liberated on realization of Truth. The first individual created was Hiranyagarbha. When he got liberated after realization of the Truth, all the individuals conceived by him should have also been liberated simultaneously along with him. Once Hiranyagarbha is liberated, all other creatures also having been liberated at the same time no ignorant people would have remained behind. Then there is no scope for further creation to take place. But we still witness creation. How does this happen?

Vasishta: Rama, say you had a dream when you were asleep. As soon as you wake up, the entire dream world of yours is liberated. But there are certain remnant tendencies in your mind. Hence you get another dream the following night when you sleep. Neither the previous night's dream nor the new dream is real from your viewpoint. Nevertheless, the current dream is real for the dream-character 'you' in the dream.

In the same way, the world exists in a latent form as a 'tendency' inside Consciousness. For a person of this world, the world is real. A liberated individual says that the world is unreal; but the person of the world does not believe him.

Say there are two friends who observe the full moon in the sky. They find it to be about 20 cm diameter. One of the friends has the ability to fly in space by virtue of some yogic powers. He flies to the lunar body, examines up close and returns to the earth. He tells his friend that the moon is not just 20 cm in diameter but is in fact a much much larger sphere. Still, the impression in the mind of his friend that the moon is 20 cm dia will not get erased. The friend who traveled in space and returned to earth too sees the moon to be only 20 cm dia but will not agree that the moon is really so small. The difference between a person in bondage and a liberated individual is about the same.

Thus, Rama, Hiranyagarbha may have attained liberation; but creation seemingly continues to go on for the person in bondage.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 61. Sage Valmiki used both prose and verse in the 61st Sarga.]

Rama: Sir, did you move around in different worlds in a limited body-form flying like a bird or witnessed in an unlimited expansive form?

Vasishta: I witnessed the worlds in an expansive form. That is to say I witnessed the worlds inside myself.

Forget me for a moment. Does anyone look at himself with his own eyes? Absolutely not. Everyone is cognizant of his body including his eyes because he has consciousness. You may understand this better through an example.

Let us take the tree in front. Is the tree aware of its body or not? It is cognizing its body of leaves, boughs, branches, stem etc. because of its consciousness only. Similarly I witnessed all the worlds as my body parts with my Consciousness-eye. Not only at that time. Even now I see the entire world in the same way through my Consciousness. It is not only me; everyone having discretionary knowledge does so.

Rama: What happened to the singing damsel while you were watching the world ?

Vasishta: She stood beside me in the form of Consciousness-Space and continued with her song. I could not see her in the ordinary state. I could see her only after I obtained the form of Consciousness-Space following deep meditation (*samādhi*).

25. Conversation by Consciousness-Space Forms

Rama: Dear Teacher! The lady was in the form of Consciousness-Space. So she could not have a mouth, tongue etc. How could she then sing?

Vasishta: Come on Rama! What is this question ? Are there various characters in your dream Consciousness-Self ? Don't they sing and talk ? Don't they perform all sorts of work ? Moreover, have we not established several times that the visible world we are in is also Consciousness-Self ?

स्वप्नोऽयं जगदाभोगो न किंचिद्वा खमेव च ।

svapno'yaṃ jagadābhogo na kiṃcidvā khameva ca |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 62, Sloka 39

We may consider this world to be equivalent to a dream or a void or simply as Consciousness-Self! It will all depend on the view point you take. I talked to her as one does in a dream.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 62.]

Rama: Sir, I do not think that you have answered my query fully. Let me repeat my question. You were in your Consciousness-Self form at that time. You did not have a mouth or tongue or other organs needed for speech. How could you then articulate the various words?

Vasishta: If organs and body are the reason for talk, a corpse too must be able to talk. There is no physical body in the dream world and therefore, no conversation should be possible in the dreams. But you do hear words and sounds in your dream. Hence you cannot say that a body and organs are required for conversation. You may ask the reason for articulation of sounds. If articulation were to be really existent, there could have been a cause for it. Further if a proper reason were to be present, the dream conversations would have been audible to everyone outside the dream.

Rama: Sir, the wakeful world can be perceived directly (*pratyakśa pramāṇa*). The dream world cannot be reached like that. How do you equate both these?

Vasishta: The wakeful world is only seemingly accessible to direct knowledge. It will not stand an in-depth inquiry. Hence I regard them both to be of the same type. Let me give you another example.

Say, a person was killed in his dream. What would happen to the dead man in the dream? He does not have a body in the dream world anymore because he was dead. Because he did not attain Self-Realization, he could not be considered as liberated. He is not inert like a stone because thinking continues in him. Is he dreaming or is he awake? He cannot be in the dream world because he died there. He is not in the wakeful world because he is not seen in the awake state. We cannot rule out his existence because thoughts about him continue in the dreamer.

Now consider that man to be in that dream condition for an extended period of time. What is the difference between such a dream character and the one in an ordinary wakeful state?

The situation obtained in the world is as follows: Innumerable minds exist in Pure Consciousness-Self. There are countless 'spaces' in each mind. Each 'space' contains a myriad of worlds. Every world has within it further worlds and several individuals in it again. All the individuals carry within their minds numerous 'spaces'. And the series continues like this without an end. Nescience is the main reason behind such an infinite series. Like wheels within wheels within wheels, the fabrication of the imaginary worlds indefinitely continues when viewed from the stance of ignorance. One can never swear a particular story to be real and another to be unreal. There is no way to distinguish the different stories.All these worlds are the concoction of the ignorant people. That is the reason for their fears of happiness and sorrow.

तत्त्वेव भयं विदुषोऽमन्वानस्य । *tattveva bhayaṃ viduṣo'manvānasya* |

Taittariyopanishad, Anandavalli 7-2

The Vedas declare that the visible world is a misery to the ignorant people.

But from the view point of the self-Realized individuals, the whole thing is a contraction of Consciousness-Self.

Rama! Once you are able to discriminate between these two viewpoints, you yourself will find an appropriate answer to your query. Now let us go ahead with the story of the girl.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 63.]

26. A House at the Center of a Rock

Vasishta: I turned towards the girl and inundated her with several questions – who was she, who was her father, who was her husband, what for and how did she come over there, where was her native land etc. etc. The girl replied to me as follows:

Vidhyadhari Lady: Oh, Greatest of the Sages! You have your world in a corner of this vast space. Along with your world are Heaven and hell. The well-known Lokaaloka Mountain Range* surrounds the earth.

[**Note:** * The Lokaaloka Mountain Range (See Section: 4) is the layer around the earth where the light rays terminate. Accordingly, this imaginary sphere of the mountain range has light on one side and darkness on the other side. Sage Valmiki poetically compared the Mountain Range to a bangle around the wrist of the Lady earth.]

Revered sir, there are so many wondrous things in the Lokaaloka Mountain Range that defy description. There are many interesting things everywhere. Each place in the mountains is unique. Some places are crowded with people. Some other places are totally deserted. Gods live in one place. There is a peak towards the northern side of the mountain range. There is a huge rock facing eastwards on that peak. I live at the center of that rock.

The center of that rock has been my abode for thousands of yugas. Not only me, my husband and other family members too live there. My husband is truly an eminent individual. He has been studying Vedas since his childhood. He fully conquered his sensory organs. I am extremely fond of him.

Let me now tell you the story of my birth. My husband had been a follower of strict orthodoxy right from his young days. He wished to have an obedient wife at that age. So he created me. You can see how good I look even today ! You can imagine how beautiful I must have been in my youth.

But my husband is a very indecisive man. He goes on endlessly weighing the pros and cons. He wanted to marry me. But at the same time he also had a desire to conquer his senses and achieve Self-Realization. Our marriage got deferred many times because of his indecisiveness. He was not affected by the postponements. But I suffered a lot from unbearable libido. I used to cry thinking that it would have been better to be a widow than to undergo such torture. Yet I could not desert him and go away. Scores of yugas passed thus. Maybe it was the effect of my long association with him, my attachment towards him turned to detachment. In the meanwhile, my husband also firmly made up his mind to pursue liberation. But because of some remnant traces of ignorance in him, he could not yet attain Self-Realization.

I too pursued a variety of yogic practices desiring Nirvana. I learnt the yogic method of Khecari posture. As a result I could meet with many liberated individuals and move in their worlds. With my yogic powers (*dharaṇa yoga*) I can witness the entire sphere of universe directly like the back of my palm. That is the reason I could come to your world and meet Your Excellency.

Revered Sir! You are very compassionate. Kindly do instruct me and my husband and help us reach Self-Realization. This is my only purpose to come to you.

Vasishta: How strange! A house at the center of a rock!? And you say that you live there along with your family? It does not sound believable!

Lady: Venerable Sir! It is not just our house and family members. We have as big a world as you have here. Just as you have the Heaven, earth and netherworld here, we too have the three worlds over there. If you are not convinced, please do come with me. I will take you to our world. You can then see for yourself.

Vasishta: (To Rama) When the Lady challenged me, I too got curious. So I traveled with her along the celestial paths for a great distance. Finally we reached the Lokaaloka Mountain Range.

I could locate the northern peak and the east facing rock also. But I did not find any world in the rock. I asked her about the worlds in the rock. She replied to me as follows:

Lady: Respected Maharishi! Very odd indeed! I am also unable to see our world as I used to. It is not that I do not see it at all. I see it more like a virtual image. I am able to see at least this much because of my habit of seeing it every day.

When you entered into *samādhi* long back, you remained as absolute Consciousness-Space. You witnessed the entire universe in that state. I could also observe all the worlds whenever I took up the yoga of concentrated mind (*dharaṇa yoga*). You came out of your *samādhi* and I left my yoga because of my conversation with you. Therefore, both of us are unable to see other worlds.

You are a Guru blessed with omniscience. I am a simple seeker. Nevertheless, we are in the same boat now. I am able to witness my world at least partially because of the habituation from the long acquaintance I have had with my world. Elders like you therefore advise us to cultivate good practices.

Venerable Saint! Let us resume focusing our mind on the Supreme Brahman. Consciousness-Space will manifest from such practice. We will then be able to witness the world inside the rock.

Vasishta: Rama! Impelled by the words of the lady, I tried to meditate sitting in lotus posture. I dropped perception of the external objects. I arrested mental cogitation. I pushed away the conversation I had with the lady to a remote corner of my mind. Gradually I entered into deep meditation (*samādhi*). I was then able to see a vast universe at the center of the rock. It was not a dream, a direct experience.

27. Brahma of the Alien World

Vasishta: The lady too witnessed the world along with me. She entered that world. I followed her. She traveled beyond heaven and other parts of that world. She finally reached the place of Brahma (Creator) of that world. She took me to Brahma and addressed me as follows:

Lady: Respected Sage! This is my husband. He created me. He created me with the purpose of marrying me. But he has not married me so far. Both of us are very much aged now. Both of us now yearn for Nirvana. So Maharishi, please teach us the essence of Truth and lead us to liberation.

Vasishta: Rama, I was surprised to listen to that lady speaking like that right in front of Brahma of that world. But she was not troubled by any of it. Disturbing Brahma from his deep meditation, she spoke to him as follows:

Lady: My dear, here is a great Sage, a Maharishi from another world. He is visiting us as a guest. Please welcome him in a befitting manner.

Brahma of the Alien World: (Opening his eyes slowly at the words of the Lady): Welcome to you Great Sage! The sweet nectar of Knowledge is your wealth! You have come from a faraway place. You must be very exhausted. Please be seated.

Vasishta: Salutations to you, Oh Brahma of another world! She has approached me with a request to instruct her Self-Knowledge. I am totally flummoxed. I am unable to assess the propriety of the things. You are the Lord of all creatures. You have realized the Supreme Consciousness. You do not need instructions from anyone. The lady here lacks the Fourfold Aids of Seeking (*sādhana sampatti*). No instruction will sink into her. I am unable to decide how I should proceed. It is also not clear to me why you have not married her after creating her to be your wife.

Brahma of the Alien World: Venerable Sage! Let me tell you the actual story. It is true that the creation of this lady happened through me. But it is purely her fanciful presumption that I created her in order to take her as my wife. She thinks so due to the innate tendencies from her past lives.Because of the fact that she was created by me with the power of my thought, I know she lacks solid reality. I am very well aware that her form is unreal. Pretty soon I am going to be liberated without the body (*videha kaivalya*). At that time my entire creation including this lady will be dissolved.

I may as well tell you how I created her. Initially I was of the form of Consciousness-Space and lived in Consciousness-Space. In course of time, I forgot a trifle about my true form. Consequently my form got a tad tainted. A little bit of the impression (*vāsana*) of I-consciousness generated because of the taint. The Goddess of substratum for such impressions transformed herself as this lady.

From my stance, she does not appear to be separate from me. You as well as she think that she is a separate 'person' apart from me. Such things come about only due to the difference in outlook. It is purely her perspective to think that she is my wife. There is no scope for differentiation of various things in my perspective.

Venerated Sage, let me summarize. I became Consciousness-Space owing to momentary forgetfulness of Pure Consciousness Self. When I was in the form of Consciousness-Space I conceived a lifespan which I have almost expended by now. I am shortly going to discard the form of Consciousness-Space and attain attributeless infinitely blissful vast Absolute state. The time for Great Dissolution is almost here. A thought to abandon her already sprouted in me. She also fell in line with me and therefore took up my path to detachment.

The lady has been able to realize from her detachment that Associating herself with Knowledgeable Gurus, Listening to scriptures, Reflection on what is heard etc., are conducive to Self-Knowledge. She successfully completed the Yoga of concentrating the mind. With the power of that yoga, she has been able to find out your secret location and request you to teach her Self-Knowledge. All these things are happening to her because she is still in ignorance.

Honored Sage! You will see innumerable worlds when you look from the position of superimposition. But you will not find anything from the angle of sublation. What remains then or now is only One thing – Consciousness-Space.

कचत्येतच्चिदम्बरम् *kacatyetaccidambaram*

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 70, Sloka 25

Maharishi Vasishta, now you may please proceed to your world. I shall withdraw the world created by me and I shall remain as Supreme Brahman.

Vasishta: Hardly did Brahma of the Alien World complete speaking thus to me, he resumed the lotus pose, became silent and entered into *samādhi*. The Lady, the I-consciousness reflection of his, too followed suit. Right in front of my eyes, the alien World Brahma devoid of thoughts began to shrink. As he got more and more emaciated, the earth, five elements etc. which served as the organs for the Universal Form of that world slowly imploded into him. Thus had the Great Dissolution (*mahāpralaya*) begun.

[**Note:** Here end the Sargas 64 - 71.]

28. Dissolution of the Fundamental Elements (Vaijnyanika Pralaya)

Vasishta: Rama, I will now recount to you the sequence of the events of Dissolution. Brahma of that world in his Cosmic form (*virāt*) began to absorb the life-forces into his heart space. Soon the attractive forces in space lost their capacity to hold together the planets and stars in position. The stars, planets, air planes etc. hurtled down like flowers from a tree. The peaks of the Meru Mountain Range collapsed.

Rama: Revered Teacher! The world is said to be the gross body for the Cosmic form of Brahma. What organs did the earth, heaven and the netherworld happen to be for the Cosmic form of Brahma ?

When Brahma had such a massive body comprising these large organs, how could he acquire another body that was more suitable for following yogic practices like breath control etc. in his world? Is it possible for any individual to have a body within another body? The description given by you seems very odd.

Vasishta: Rama, we have clearly established that the visible world is an illusory form superimposed on Pure Consciousness. Gross body is one fancy imagination; so also the mental body. The I-consciousness presumed to be present within the bodies is yet another illusion. When it is proven that everything is a pure concoction, any question on what has become which organ has no relevance. Nor is there any meaning in asking how one body could exist within another body. Let us take an example.

Say, you had a dream. You are the macrocosm for the dream. You are about to move on to the wakeful state. The thought to shift to the awake state is yours. As soon as the thought to awake occurs, the dream world beings are absorbed back. Apply this dream analogy of dissolution to the worlds of the alien Brahma and your doubts will automatically get resolved.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 72.]

Rama: I agree that the metaphor suggested by you is quite apt, Teacher. You expounded in detail the process of superimposition a couple of times in the past. More recently you explained one more time in the 33rd Sarga of Yoga Vasishta, Nirvana Prakarana, pūrvārdham, Book 6, Chapter on Liberation. But will you please enlighten once again so that the subject sinks in firmly ?

Vasishta: Rama, think of the situation after the Dissolution. What exists at that time would be Pure Non-dual Consciousness-Self, without a second. This state is comparable to the situation you will be in just before falling asleep. You are not fully awake in that condition. Hence the innate tendencies related to the wakeful state have ended. You have not entered into the dream world yet. Hence the dream tendencies of the mind also are absent. Obviously then you are in a condition free from the past impressions and also the dream world modifications which are yet to commence. You are neither a 'seer' nor a 'seen object' at this stage. You are just *Drik* (Potent-Looker). From this stage of dozing, you suddenly enter into the dream world. You would then become a 'seer'. Similarly, Brahma who had stayed as mere *Drik* after dissolution, is engulfed by the thoughts of 'seer and seen'. Immediately duality sets in. With that arises the feeling of 'me in here' and 'the world out there'. This division of a 'me' and a 'world' creates space time differentiation. Once the space time separation is created, agency for action (doership), effect of what is done, the triads (*triputi*) like doer-action-act, experiencer- experiencing-object of experience follow suit. Next comes the world of the senses and bodies. Subsequently division of the worlds into upper and lower takes place bolstering these concepts.

Rama: Revered Sir, you seem to refer to the conceptualization by the mind. If this is all nothing but mental imagination, how is it that we experience a world that is rock-solid composed of the five elements but not a subtle one made of mindstuff?

Vasishta: Experiencing the solidity of the world is like seeing water in a mirage. It is as unreal as the flow of water in a desert seen due to optical illusion. Because of the inherent falsity in it, the substrate macrocosm (*virāt puruśa*) is entirely unaffected and continues to remain as Pure Consciousness in spite of the multilayered superimposition.

The whole galaxy (*brahmānda*) constitutes the body of the Consciousness-Self. Initially it was like an egg. The egg broke into two pieces. One piece went up. Another fell down. The intermittent part became the space. Many worlds formed within it. But all these are still within *virāt puruśa* as his parts. Therefore, we assert that any work done by any entity within the cosmos is actually an act of *virāt puruśa*.

Rama: If that is so, we have to admit that *virāt puruśa* goes through the cycles of births and deaths because we find that all creatures suffer birth and death within this world.

Vasishta: Suppose the leaves of a tree have fallen down. Does it mean that the tree has fallen? If the leaves, branches etc. all fall down simultaneously, one may take that the entire tree has fallen down.

In the same way, if all the individuals together die at one time, *virāt puruśa* too will die. Such a thing happens at the time of the Great Dissolution (*maha pralaya*). It takes a pretty long time for such things to happen. The purānās call the period as "*dviparārtha kala*." The point I would, however, like to make is that the words *virāt*, world and Brahman are synonyms! There is no difference in what they connote.

Rama: We can admit that the world and *virāt* are the same because the worlds arise due to *virāt* and with the dissolution of the worlds, *virāt* too dissolves. But how can one equate Supreme Brahman also with them?

Vasishta: Rama, say you took up a ritual of worship within your mind. You conceived a seat in your heart for the God of your worship. You sit in front of God. Then you begin the actual ritual.

Now consider, what exactly is the seat? Who is the God seated on it ? Who is that "you" sitting in front of God in your imagination? Are they not all the same? Because you exist outside, all this imagination could go on in your mind. In a similar vein, you can say that because there is Supreme Brahman, the entire episode of *virāt* has taken place. I said, therefore, that world, *virāt* and Supreme Brahman are one and the same.

We used the technique of superimposition in this analysis. We may adopt the process of sublation too in order to arrive at the same conclusion. Let me illustrate the process of sublation through a brief description of the Dissolution that took place within the universe of the Hard Rock.

I told you already that the Alien World Brahma went into a deep meditation (*samādhi*). I noticed ten Suns rising in ten directions immediately after that. As I was watching them in bewilderment, I found two more Suns rising – one from the earth and another from the sky. The twelve Suns created a huge conflagration everywhere. All the worlds were burnt down to ashes in the inferno. I ran away to a remote place in space and observed the happenings from that distant spot.

Ghastly winds of Dissolution swept across those lands. Waters in all the oceans evaporated. Flames intensified. The clouds of Dissolution called *puśkarāvartakas* appeared in the sky from an unknown location. They rained so heavily as if several mighty rivers were discharging water together. The solid earth dissolved in the deluge. The twelve Suns were drowned in the floods. That entire world appeared to me as a huge sphere of water.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sargas 73 - 78.]

Water filled all the worlds — from netherworlds below to the Tapoloka at the top. Satyaloka alone was left dry.

[**Note:** There are seven worlds below the earth. They are the Atala,Vitala, Sutala, Talatala, Mahatala, Rasatala, and Patala (netherworld). There are six worlds above the earth. These are the Bhuvah, Suvah, Mahah, Janah, Tapah and Satyam. Thus the earth is almost at the center of all these 14 Lokas (worlds). Because it is described above that even the Tapoloka was under the water , we have to infer that the water is not the type of water we are familiar with on the earth but refers to the unquintuplicated 'water' of the fundamental five elements.]

Vasishta: I closely observed the goings on in the only remaining world - Satyaloka. Multitudes of sages and Gods turned up from all corners and gathered around Brahma. Each adopted lotus posture and went into deep meditation. The twelve Suns who spitted fierce fires earlier and the gods of waters too joined them in deep meditation. As I was observing, the four-faced Brahma in their midst attained the final stages of Realization. As we negate each superimposed layer that accreted during Adhyaropa (superimposition), what will be remaining is the Pure Consciousness-Self. *nididhyāsa* is the process of repeatedly focusing the mind and contemplating on that Pure Consciousness-Self.

Once *nididhyāsa* is firmed up and ripens, another process commences without any dependence on the mind. It is the continuous wave of Antahkarana (inner organ) taking the form of Brahman. This modification of the inner organ is also called the final stage of Realization. The fundamental nescience which is the root cause for all the illusory imaginations ends with the attainment of Realization.

I saw with my own eyes Brahma of that Alien Hard Rock world achieving Liberation without the body. Satyaloka could not be seen by me anymore the moment Brahma attained Videhamukti. The mountains, rivers, Sages, gods, and everything there appeared to me as Brahman. The dream world suddenly disappears on waking up from the defect of sleep and the person who dreamt alone remains.

Similarly, the moment the defect called ignorance is lost by gaining wakefulness called Knowledge by Hiranyagarbha, the entire world of the Hard Rock disappeared and Pure Consciousness alone remained.

29. Disproving the Atheistic Perspective

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki devotes a major part of this Sarga (from Sloka 18 to the end) in contradicting the atheistic viewpoint. The verses are deep in content. He himself raises several arguments in support of atheism and demolishes each of them. The discussions go on here without Rama being the questioner, maybe because the Sage did not like to project Rama raising doubts on this topic. We shall, however, continue to present the content of this Sarga in the form of questions and answers. Commentator, Shri ABS, offers very detailed analysis of the verses and his views are also integrated into the text below.]

Questioner: Sir, the analogy of the dream world provided by you here does not look quite appropriate. For example, the body of the person who dreams has a father and mother. His body is subjected to a chain of cause and effect relationships. On the other hand there is no parentage to a dream body. Nor do any causal relationships can be established for it. Therefore, there could be a possibility of a dream body disappearing on waking up. But we cannot say that an awake body disappears on gaining Knowledge.

Answer: A heavenly body may be obtained through rituals and sacrifice. There are no parents for it either. Will you, therefore, say that it is also like the dream body without 'beingness'?

Questioner: We may say so.

Answer: If that is so, then Hiranyagarbha who is a composite of the subtle bodies also has to be one without beingness.

Questioner: Let it be.

Answer: In that case, the entire creation of Hiranyagarbha would be totally non-existent. But we see the world. One day the world will end in Dissolution. All the bodies present will disappear in the Dissolution. It happened like that in the past. Once the bodies in a creation are gone, there is no scope for any parents to be left for producing the bodies of the immediately following next creation. If we agree to this, we have also to admit that all the visible bodies in the wakeful state are like those in a dream world. Will you accept?

Questioner: No ! Why should we presume that the rituals, sacrifices and dissolutions you talk about are true? Our position is that the current mode of reproduction through parentage is beginningless.

Answer: You may say so. Still we have to accept that the five fundamental elements are the cause for all things in the creation. The five elements are constituted by certain parts within them. The elements obtain their form from the coalescing of the parts.

Any form that emerges from the combination of some components does have to disintegrate one day or other as commonly seen from our experience. How can a world stay if the basic five elements themselves have disintegrated ? Therefore, it is not possible to deny the existence of Dissolution.

Questioner: Let us set aside space for the present. Consider the four remaining elements. These are inert. But qualities like intelligence, desire etc. are engendered in the body when the four of them combine to form a body. Starch, molasses, jaggery etc. do not have within any one of them the quality of inebriation. But if you boil them all together, they cause a soporific effect. We contend that intelligence is produced in the body in the same way. The intelligence is also called *samvit* to indicate that it is mental modification. A body possessing *samvit* is an individual self.

If the above proposal is accepted, it may prove counter to the Vedic, scriptural, mythological and historical documents. But it can easily explain the real nature of creation. There is no need to invoke Dissolution etc.

Answer: Let us forget what I proposed. According to your concept, do the various organs of the body constitute 'selves' or does a separate 'self' comprising all the organs exist? Shall we have to describe each of the sensory organs to be a separate self because each one of them has a different faculty ?

If they are different, nothing stipulates that the various sense organs have to function in coordination. If the coordination happens just by chance, there is no guarantee that it will stay permanently. The body will collapse in the absence of coordination within the sense organs.

Questioner: We say that all the sense organs combined together form 'self' as per your second suggestion.

Answer: If it is so, chopping down any one organ would kill the self because there are no parts within the self. But we don't see this to be the case in the world. Further with the disintegration of the body, all the qualities acquired by the body should get extinguished. But at least in some cases we find that a dead person even after the cremation of his body appears as a ghost to his relatives and discusses the past events. How will you explain this from your theory?

Questioner: We do not subscribe to the daft concept of ghosts and devils, Sir. We rely only on direct evidence as a means of knowledge.

Answer: You undoubtedly employ several logical techniques in order to prove your contention that direct evidence is the only reliable means of knowledge. Utilization of logical techniques implies that you accept logic as a means of knowledge. But even with all this debate, you still do not want to agree with me. You use language to express your ideas. Right? In other words you accept word (sound) as a means of knowledge. If you critically examine, you have been covertly employing various means of knowledge to establish your ideas while at the same time denying every one of them. Who would believe in you under such conditions?

Further, take your statement regarding the belief in ghosts. Do you see the soporific quality in liquor? No. Does it appear to someone who has taken a drink? No again! You deduce from the behavior of a drunkard that he is inebriated and conclude that the intoxicating effect is within the liquor. This is knowledge by inference but not by direct experience/perception.

We may apply similar inferential means with regard to a person possessed by a ghost. We can infer from his behavior that he is possessed by a ghost. We have to also agree that the ghost did not come from within him and it came from the cremated body. The existence of ghosts thus becomes undeniable. When you are not in a position to deny the existence of ghosts, how can you refuse the existence of higher worlds and subtle bodies?

Questioner: If one were to depend on one's own experience alone to decide the 'existence' of objects, one has to say that silver exists in nacre in the oft quoted example of silver in nacre.

Answer: You have to appreciate here that the state of reality is a function of the state of knowledge of the person. At the time a man visualizes silver in nacre, his knowledge is an imagination. As far as the state of imagination is concerned, silver is real in that state.

With a change in perspective at a later time, the imagination has dissolved. Along with it, the beingness of silver in nacre too disappeared. The current empirical knowledge is thus more reliable compared to the imaginary knowledge possessed earlier. Based on the present more reliable knowledge, he now decides that the silver that appeared to him when he was imagining it in nacre did not have beingness even at that time. We cannot compare the existence or otherwise of subtle bodies etc. to the example of silver in nacre because our decision about their existence was not arrived at when we were imagining things.

Summing up the argument we may say that it is not wrong to compare the wakeful world with that of the dream world. We get a dream body because of our infatuation with the stored impressions from the wakeful state. With the elimination of such impressions, the dream body disappears. Likewise, the wakeful state body takes form because of the innate tendencies accumulated from the past lives. By wakeful state body, we do not mean merely the visible gross body made of flesh-blood-bones. What we mean is the subtle body that is inside and gives support to the gross body. It is also referred to as the Ativahika body or Mental body. The experience-able world takes shape around us because of this mental body inside us. If the innate tendencies causal to the formation of the subtle body are eliminated, the subtle body and along with it the world created by it too will disappear! What remains will then be the Pure Consciousness-Self.

Questioner: Your entire theory appears to be centered on the stored impressions. I would like to know where these impressions or innate tendencies have come from.

1. Will you say that the impressions are inhered from the Supreme Brahman ? But the Vedas hold:

तदेतद्ब्रह्म - अपॊर्वमनपरम् *tadetadbrahma - apa◌ॊrvamanaparam*

Bruhadaranyakopanishad 4-5-19

(Meaning: The Supreme Brahman is neither the cause for nor the effect of anything). Therefore, the Vedas themselves do not lend support to such a contention.

2. Or would you say that the innate tendencies have been acquired from

the worlds of the past Kalpas? But then the impressions of the past Kalpa would have been annihilated along with the worlds of that time at the end of the Kalpa during the Great Dissolution (*maha pralaya*) phase. Hence, it would not have been possible for them from the worlds of the past Kalpas.

3. As an alternative you may suggest that certain subtler worlds continue to exist even though the gross worlds are dissolved during the Great Dissolution. But such an assumption will only add more problems than solving any. For example:

i.The remnant subtle world would have to have 'beingness.' Where from it would have got the beingness – is it its own or is it derived from that of the Supreme Brahman?

ii. If it has beingness on its own, it would mean that there are two things having beingness: Supreme Brahman and the past worlds. But Vedas will not accept it. The scriptures declare that :

सदेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयम् ।

sadeva somyedamagra āsīdekamevādvitīyam |

Chandogyopanishad 6-2-1

(Meaning: The entire world existed as the Supreme Brahman prior to creation).

Hence, one and only one thing should have to have existence prior to creation. You cannot propose two things having beingness contrary to the above Vedic dictum.

4. You may come up with the idea that the past worlds acquired their beingness from the Supreme Brahman. This would imply that beingness can be obtained from an adjacent entity. Such a statement is meaningless because every non-existent thing (i.e. a thing having no beingness) would be able to obtain beingness from an 'existent' neighbor.

5. If it is possible to acquire beingness from an adjoining entity, would it not mean that there is no difference between dissolution and creation? But we do not see creation in dissolution. You insist that creation does exist in dissolution even though it is not visible to us. This would tantamount to admitting that existence (beingness) and non-existence are equivalent. How could anyone accept such a statement?

Examining thus from any angle, the past impressions you speak about do not seem to 'exist.' That being the case, why do you harp on annihilating the non-existent impressions?

Answer: Even though you have not followed our argument properly and thoroughly, you have stated precisely the very same conclusion that we wished to arrive at. It is not our stand that impressions have true beingness or that they undergo annihilation.

What we do like to convey is that Brahman is Non-dual and without a second. We would also like to affirm that the visible world has no existence. We proposed the halfway step of impressions to lead us towards the above conclusion. It is purely a tentative step. We hypothesized this step at a stage when the listener has not as yet achieved Self-Knowledge. This intermittent tentative step is necessary only as long as the student does not attain Self-Knowledge. What is the way to establish the fact that impressions etc. do not exist in Brahman before one knows about Brahman? The only available means of knowledge for this is Vedas. Tentatively assume that impressions exist and then examine the assumption in the light of what Vedas declare. Then it can be easily realized that impressions do not exist at all. Pure Consciousness Brahman shines as the only substance existing.

If we go by logic alone, we find that the Supreme Brahman has two states –the known and the unknown. Brahman in the unknown state is the manifest world and so also are the impressions. Ignorance is also Brahman in an unknown state and is the root cause for *vāsanās* (impressions).

Eradication of ignorance is Knowledge. That itself is the annihilation of impressions. That is the known state of the Supreme Brahman. Expressed differently, externalization of Knowledge is bondage. There is no opposite action to it like internalization. Ending externalization is Nirvana.

Vasishta: Rama, Hiranyagarbha of the Hard Rock World attained Nirvana. The liberation he obtained is also termed as non-inertness, Knowledge (*Vedana*), and Deep sleep state (*Supta*). The state contrary to *Supta*, the normal awake state is bondage. Now you choose whether you would like to have this type of deep sleep (*Supta*) or awake state of bondage.

[**Note:** Nirvana is referred to as *Supta* since it resembles the actionless deep sleep state. Here ends the Sarga 79.]

30. Dissolution Of The Causal Factors (Praakrita pralaya)

The Dissolution I have thus far described to you is called Dissolution of the five elements. The narration is done from the standpoint of the Absolute. It is also possible to view it from the position of bondage. Viewed from this angle it is described as Dissolution of the causal factors (*prākrita pralaya*). Yogis have the capacity to witness it. In this process, each of the effects is absorbed in their respective causes. This absorption process goes right up to the stage of Brahman with attributes. Now I shall describe to you how the Dissolution of the causal factors proceeds.

Vasishta: Rama, right in front of my eyes, everyone in the world of the Hard Rock quietly disappeared like lamps that were extinguished. Soon the twelve Suns surrounded the world and burnt it with their blazing flares. Then they went into deep meditation and attained Nirvana along with Brahma. The fourteen worlds including the Brahmalok turned into a mighty ocean. The oceans became extremely turbulent with high waves. The waves scattered hither and thither the Pushkaravarta clouds which were the cause for the tempest. The clouds slowly merged with the ocean waters.

I then saw a dark mammoth body. I was a bit scared seeing that fierce form. It was like a massive dark mountain. It had five heads. There were three eyes on each head. The eyes were radiating fiery rays. There were ten hands attached to that body and the hands were holding a trident. Eventually I gained back my courage. I could understand that it was Rudra. I bowed down to him from a distance.

Rama: Revered Teacher! How did the all pervading Supreme Brahman contract to this limited form? Why is his color dark? What are those heads and limbs? What happened to the Goddess of Maya that always shadows Him?

Vasishta: Rama, there is an illusory thought wave that is causal to creation, sustenance and dissolution. It is called the I-consciousness or Ego. The Supreme Brahman is veiled by superimposition because of I-consciousness. A few of the individuals who are covered by superimposition take refuge in Him. He assumes some form to free such individuals from sorrow. One of the names for sorrow (in Sanskrit) is "*Ruk*." A word for dispelling in Sanskrit is "*drāvana*." One who dispels sorrow is *Ruk* + *drāvana* = *Rudra*. So Rudra stands for removal of sorrow. But what is strange is that it is He who causes sorrow. He is the cause of sorrow when He takes the form of 'separation and attachment' within multiple objects. As an Identity in all, he removes all sorrows. The five sensory organs are His five faces. The five action organs are His right hands. The objects of His action organs are His left hands. Because space is his body, I described Him as dark. I said that He had three eyes on each of His five heads. The sets of three eyes in each of the head respectively stand for

(1) *Satva, Rajas* and *Tama* qualities;
(2) Past, Future and Present times; (3) Memory, Ego and Intellect; (4) the three sounds of A, U and M in AUM; and (5) Rik, Yajus and Sama Vedas. The trident in His hands represents the three worlds – *Bhuh*, *Bhuvah* and *Suvah*.

Because He is the collective I-consciousness of all the individuals, each individual within His creation possesses a natural attachment to his own body and mind. One of His qualities is to dispense the fruits of evolution and devolution to all the individuals. It is Supreme Brahman who inspires Him for creation and dissolution.

Resuming the story, Rudra suddenly opened his mouth and began sucking all the waters. I could see his mouth full of fire. The entire water body occupying the 14 worlds evaporated into His mouth within a few seconds. I could distinctly see the dark Rudra, the slushy earth, and space between the two egg pieces, the worlds above and below (See Section 28).

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 80.]

A cosmic dance then commenced with a jerk by Rudra. Goddess Maya who was shadowing joined Him immediately in the dance. There was neither a Sun nor a Moon shining at that time. I wondered how Rudra was able to cast a shadow in the absence of any light. I couldn't find an answer to my doubt; but that very Goddess who appeared as a shadow of Rudra, took a swift leap to face Him and danced with more vim and vigor. Sun and moon appeared to be her eyes. Rivers, trees, mountains, stars, different worlds like Heaven and hell and other things appeared to me to be her limbs. In addition to wreaths of flowers, she also wore garlands of crowbars, spades, axes, winnowing pans, wooden pestles etc.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki elaborated the dance of that dark night from the 8th sloka in the 81st Sarga to the end of the Sarga (102nd sloka). The dance was interpreted by him both in poetic and philosophical terms. He closed the description of the dance highlighting the similarities between the dance ritual and the process of search for Truth. The significance of the dance of the dark night is briefly explained by the Sage in the next (82nd) Sarga.

Here ends the Sarga 81.

31. The Twin Engines — Creation and Dissolution

Rama: Venerable Teacher! I am a bit confused! You said that Dissolution had taken place. You also said that the earth turned slushy and muddy. You said that only the netherworlds, earth and the two pieces of the galaxy (*brahmānda*) were visible. But you also say in the same breath that rivers, mountains, trees etc. were the organs of the dark night. Spades, axes and crowbars had become wreaths around her neck. Where did these come from ?

Vasishta: Your question is quite valid from the point of view of logic. Neither was Rudra a male figure nor was the dark night a lady. In fact, they were not even human forms. It was not an actual dance either! Strangely, though, the dance appears only when viewed from an illusory perspective.

[**Note:** The commentator, Shri ABS, added a few more details on this point. According to him, it is possible that some of the things eliminated during the illusory phase may sometimes re-germinate. We come across people reappearing by the power of Yogis long after they were dead and cremated. A lunatic reports his experience of interacting with the dead. We also see several bizarre things happening in our dreams. Hence we may conclude from these instances that many things stay as impressions in our mind as long as we continue to be besieged by ignorance.]

Vasishta: Rama, can gold *exist* without a form? Can peppers *be* without their hot taste? Similarly, an objective form is unavoidable for Consciousness as long as ignorance continues. Until you are able to realize Consciousness, it continues to be associated with ignorance. It appears as objects under ignorance. Therefore, it is quite possible sometimes for objects to reappear even after they were destroyed.

For that reason some people worship the forms of Shiva, Vishnu or Brahma, the very thing I described as Consciousness-space, Supreme Brahman or Lord Ishwar from the Absolute point of view.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 82.]

I could, therefore, understand that the God Rudra and the Goddess Maya who had appeared to me at that time were no more than my hallucination. Only I could witness those shapes and nobody else saw them. In order to talk about the attributeless (non-objectifiable) consciousness, it becomes necessary to use words and concepts. Such make-believe is unavoidable. Hence I gave an account of the form of Rudra fancied by me at that time.

Rama: Revered Teacher! Viewed from the Absolute stance, there is no world. From an empirical angle, the world seems to exist. So it has some sort of 'beingness.' But even such a trace of 'beingness' will have to be annihilated in Dissolution.

With the ending of beingness, the trio of consciousness, movement and the one who moves would have been lost automatically. How could the dance go on in the absence of the trio?

Vasishta: It would depend on how you define Dissolution. If you say that the state of complete eradication of the trio is Dissolution, it is a definition valid from the Absolute viewpoint. Worlds cannot exist in that position, as you yourself admit.

If not, you may say that we have to allow for the presence of a little bit of ignorance in Dissolution because it would otherwise be impossible for creation to take place again. In that case, the trio too would exist to some extent along with that ignorance in Dissolution. Going by this contention, it is possible for the imaginary appearance of the dance of Shiva during Dissolution.

But the important carry home message is that Ishvar abides himself firmly in the Absolute while functioning within the empirical world. You too should develop this frame of outlook.

Rama: Thank you Teacher! Kindly explain the dance of Goddess Kalabhairavi from the perspective of the empirical world. What did she do with all those crowbars, spades, mortars and pestles, winnowing pans, sieves etc. around her neck?

Vasishta: I talked about two forms – Rudra and His shadow Goddess Maya. These are also called Bhairav and Bhairavi. Bhairav is Consciousness-Self, beyond mind and speech. His thought wave is the energy of movement. This energy is Bhairavi. Her other names are: Individual-consciousness; Origination; Aapti; Samskriti; Vikriti; Sushka; Jaya; Vijaya; Chandika; Utpala; Siddha; Aparajita; Durga; Uma; Sama; Gayatri; Savitri; Saraswati; Bhaava; Anaahata; etc. etc. These names are given to her depending on the type of her action or from the way her devotees worship her.

The various works done by the Goddess are portrayed by me as her dance.

The creation and sustenance of all living creatures, the way they age and die and other related things that pertain to them are all her actions. She takes as her body the make-believe world which is produced through ignorance. Because I depicted the various works done by her as her dance, I described the working implements as her ornaments. The mountain ranges, rivers, weaponry etc. are her organs.

Rama: This would bring me back to my earlier question. I asked you how a dance was possible at the time of Dissolution because nothing would have lasted there. You told me that it would be possible depending on our outlook. From what you say now, it looks as though creation, life etc. can take place right at the time of Dissolution under the name of a dance. If that were to be so, both creation and Dissolution are taking place simultaneously. Is that possible?

Vasishta: Several times during our discussions earlier, I pointed out that the world does not have a clear cut existence or non-existence. The world is both existent and non-existent. When the world does not have pure existence, can Dissolution have pure existence? Obviously no.

So we have to concede that Dissolution too does not have pure existence or non-existence just like creation. When we understand from the Absolute point that there is neither creation nor dissolution, both lose existence at the same time and both will disappear. If you consider creation and dissolution from the empirical world perspective, both go hand in hand.

If you recall, we stated that during the Dissolution period of one Brahma, creation by Indava Brahmas continued without any hindrance (vide the Story of Indava in Chapter III: Creation – Part II of our Series). We also established there that all types of creations were purely imaginary. That is the reason why the earth and other worlds which happened to be the organs of Bhairavi did not rock though she was dancing. The dream worlds hardly wobble if you shake the bed of the dreamer! Your question will lose its locus once you appreciate the fact that dissolution is as unreal as creation. Keep that in mind while considering the dance of Bhairavi.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 84.]

When Goddess Bhairavi danced with fast rotational movements of her long hands, the entire space looked like a forest with trees emerging everywhere. In addition to the various implements she was wearing, all objects in creation having existence or no existence, timely and untimely things etc. also became her ornaments. When she was twirling in circles, the gyrations gave the appearance of worlds just as rings of fire appearing around a swinging fire-brand. From this I understood that until we realized the True Supreme Ishwar, we would continue to notice only the power of action and that there was actually no difference between the worlds and the Goddess Bhairavi who was the embodiment of the power of action. Remember, I already told you that the Goddess was a form manifested by a thought wave of Shiva's Consciousness.

32. Contact With Shiva

Rama: Sir, it is the same whether we call it a thought wave or a desire. It has no form. How does a formless thought wave turn into a world having a form?

Vasishta: Let us consider motion in wind. Motion is dependent on the substrate wind. Motion does not have a form. It does not have any sound either. But when the breeze is strong enough, a whizzing hiss is produced. That is the nature of the breeze. In the same way, Shiva's thought because of its nature appears in the form of the world.

Continuing my narration, the Goddess unexpectedly touched Shiva, her Lord and cause in the course of the dance. In no time her form began to dissolve, leaving finally Shiva alone. The sequence of her dissolution was as follows: during the dance itself, the veiling power surrounding Shiva diminished slightly. As a result she could come in contact with Shiva.

By touching Him, she lost her physical form and obtained the form of the gross five elements. This was followed by a process which was the reverse of quintuplication. Consequently, she attained a subtle five elemental form. Then her form changed to that of impressions. After that she became an undifferentiated space. Finally she was absorbed in Shiva.

Rama: How come, Teacher, such a mighty Goddess was reduced to nothingness by a mere touch of Shiva? How could she fuse with Shiva ?

Vasishta: Rama, we have already said that the Goddess was a thought wave of Shiva's desire. What is the quality of any desire in the world? The desire lasts as long as what is desired is not secured. The moment the desired thing is obtained, the thought wave of desire ends. There is no higher desire for Shiva than reaching Himself. So no sooner the Goddess came in touch with Shiva, His thought wave ended. When the thought stops, the world too disappears and Shiva alone remains.

Rama: If that is the case, we should say that the world (*Prakriti*) was obliterated and Shiva remained; but why should we say that the world was absorbed into Shiva?

Vasishta: We have already seen that the world is only a shadow of Shiva. Suppose a traveler in hot Sun took shelter under the shade of a tree. What happens to the shadow of the person? Can we say that it was destroyed ? Or can we say that it merged in the shadow of the tree? Or shall we say that it united with the man? If we say that the shadow was destroyed, it would implicitly mean that it was real to start with. So we cannot say so. If we say that it merged with the shadow of the tree, the shadow of the tree should become denser; but it does not happen so. Hence it is best to declare that the shadow of the man merged into the man who was the cause for it. Hence I said that the world (*Prakriti*) was absorbed into *Purusha,* that is Shiva.

Rama: But as soon as the man gets out of the shadow of the tree, his shadow forms again. In the same way then, there is a scope for an individual who was united with Shiva to be reborn and suffer in the world again sometime or other.

Vasishta: No, the analogy will not work here. You cannot stretch a simile beyond the intended specific point of illustration. If one has to come into the world, one should have a desire to do so. Such a desire will not be born to one who was exposed to the Truth, had contact with Shiva and finally united with Him.

Let me give you another illustration. Suppose an honest man joined a group of thieves because he was misled to believe them to be good people. He would work for their good under the impression that they were honest people. Eventually their real nature gets exposed and he understands that they had always been thieves. Will that noble man like to be associated with them again? Likewise, an individual who attains Self-realization will not like to ever reenter the world. [Does he retain separate identity!]

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 85.]

Rama, let me continue the story. So far we have covered the process of Dissolution till the Goddess Maya was absorbed in Rudra. Now I shall narrate the sequence of the sublation of Shiva too.

After the absorption of the Goddess into Shiva, the upper and lower worlds and the space in between were left. Rudra inhaled the two worlds through his mouth and swallowed them. He alone remained there as space within a space. Soon He rose as a cloud and transformed into a nine inch stick. He then became a speck of glass. He became smaller and was no more visible.

From then on I used my clairvoyant vision to observe him. Rudra reduced further to the size of an atom and a subatomic particle and totally disappeared. Surprisingly with His disappearance even the space that was visible so far could not be seen anymore. Because there was no percept to be perceived within it, I surmised that it attained the Infinite Brahman form.

I was completely overwhelmed. The entire sequence of past events revolved in my mind — The visit of Lady Vidhyadhara, my visit to the world of Hard Rock, the Great Dissolution of that world right before my eyes, the swallowing of the worlds by Rudra as a fawn would have devoured tender leaves [delete] and so on. I felt like a naive villager witnessing the grandeur of the Royalty for the first time.

33. Worlds, Worlds Everywhere !

Vasishta:(Continuing): Then came a bigger surprise. I found several Hard Rocks similar to the one described so far. I could see in each of them worlds akin to the body of the Goddess of *māya* that we discussed. But they were not visible to the normal eye.

buddhinetreṇa dṛśyante divyākṣṇā vā na te yathā

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 86, Sloka 24

One would need either clairvoyance or a realized eye. A realized eye means nothing but the mind without the I-consciousness. Viewed with such an eye, I found many many extraordinary worlds not only in stones but also in the blades of grass, in the leaves of plants and creepers, bushes, in fact everywhere I could lay my sight on!

I did not find any organized structure or well-defined laws in those worlds. For example, a creator was just taking birth in one of them. In another world the creator was already being sublated. Yet another world is flourishing with creation. In one of the worlds even gods faced death. Gods and demons were cozying up with each other in one of the worlds. Ravana was killed by young boy Rama in a world. Yet in another world, Ravana killed Rama! Thus were the queer ways of those weird worlds.I deduced from the above observations that the systematic logic observed in our world was something that we developed out of our habits and conditioning but is not intrinsic to the world !

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta made references to strange and bizarre worlds not only here but also in the Story of Bhusunda and at another place in the latter part of the present Chapter: Nirvana. A description of such worlds is given from the 23rd sloka to the 48th. We highlighted only the salient points here from these verses.

The following sloka in the last part of the above description contains the word '*vihata*' which means killed:

क्वचिदल्पेन रामेण हतरावणराक्षसम्
रक्षसा रावणेनैव क्वचिद्विहतराघवम्

kvacidalpena rāmeṇa hatarāvaṇarākṣasam
rakṣasā rāvaṇenaiva kvacidvihatarāghavam

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 86, Sloka 45

The commentator, Shri ABS, perhaps because of his reluctance to state that Ravana killed Rama, interpreted the word '*vihata*' differently. He gave the meaning as Ravana 'deceived' Rama to the phrase '*vihata raghavam*' in the above verse.

Whatever it may be, the main purport of Sage Vasishta's narration was to emphasize the absence of any rigid rules in creation. Rama's next question concerns the above depiction.]

Rama: It sounds very interesting! Did I exist in the past? If it were to be so, did I exist

with a mind and body similar to what I have now? Does everything of the present match with what was in the past ?

Vasishta: Rama, suppose we gathered black gram lentils into a heap. Later we measure the heap with a measuring jar and pour the lentils as another mound.

पूर्यमाणा यथा माषाः क्रमेणान्येन तेन वा ।

pūryamāṇā yathā māṣāḥ krameṇānyena tena vā |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 86, Sloka 51

Can we vouchsafe that the earlier and present piles are exactly the same? Or can we say they are not the same? The situation is about the same with respect to different creations. Or take another example. Waves rise in the ocean, subside and rise again. Is it possible to contend that the same old waves reappeared? Or can we prove that the waves are totally new? In the same way changes in the individuals take place in the vast number of creations, retaining resemblance at some places, bringing in differences at some other places and with no observable rule or rhyme at many of the places.

पुनस्त्वं पुनरेवाहं पुनः पुनरिमे जनाः
न कदाचन नैवान्ये संभवन्त्यखिलं परे

punastvaṃ punarevāhaṃ punaḥ punarime janāḥ
na kadācana naivānye saṃbhavantyakhilaṃ pare

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 86, Sloka 52

(Meaning: You were born again; I am born again. All the individuals (*jīvas*) are born again and again. This is from the empirical worldview. But from the stance of the Absolute, Supreme Brahman alone exists. No other at no time originated in It).

Your second question was whether the events and situations at that time and now are identical. Let us first understand what comprises ‘events and situations.’ The various elements in an event or situation can be the particular shape of the body, the individual’s relationships, his intelligence, his abilities and achievements etc. These factors carry some similarities and some differences in each creation. One may be born as a human being once and as an animal in another birth. Can we call them to be identical or declare them to be different? We cannot for sure affirm one way or the other. That being so, who can definitively pronounce whether life situations are similar or dissimilar in different creations?

What is important, therefore, is to know the truth that lies behind creation.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 86.]

In order to get a handle on it, I shall reveal in some detail my experience at that time. I took a close look at myself when a multitude of creations seemed to appear to me in every stone, plant or mound etc. Surprise surprise! A variety of worlds appeared in me and in every organ of mine. I meticulously investigated their origin. I discovered that these world-like trees germinated from the seeds of impressions stuck somewhere in my mind-space (heart-space), just like some stray seeds wedged in the cracks of a pavement would sprout during the rainy season. It is analogous to a world suddenly popping up as soon as you shift from deep sleep to dream state or wakeful state.

34. Unfolding of Creation

Rama: Do you like to say, Sir, that there is no rule or rhyme in creation?

Vasishta: We do seem to find a certain order within the creation of the wakeful world. But in the case of the creation within the dream world, we find that all things were created at once. Experts hold divergent views with respect to this matter. Some say that even a fraction of a second is a measurable duration and hence even the dream world could have evolved within a certain time period, though it appears to be sudden. After all, they hold that no one can stipulate a minimum time period for evolution.

Others surmise that just as entire worlds are embedded within an atom, eons of time could be telescoped into a second and therefore, it is irrelevant to talk about measurement of time scales. Both these viewpoints do, however, subscribe to the notion that there is no purpose in discussing the progression or order in the development of the world when the whole thing itself is a pure phantasm.

Nevertheless, I observed the developmental order in the world assuming the 'universal form'. By 'universal form' I mean that I conceived myself as the entire visible world. Then I could make out the following sequence:

The first thought that originated was about directions. The directions transformed as space. Following the thought of space, mind took shape in me. I felt that the space was me. This feeling became the source for I-consciousness. With increasing I-consciousness, the idea that the space is me got consolidated. With that I forgot my original state. My I-consciousness attained at this point the quality of intellect. With intellect forming, a few firm beliefs precipitated within me.

As my intellect firmed up, the feeling that I was the space got reduced and thoughts, counter thoughts and doubt took root. My intellect acquired the qualities of mind at this stage. My mind began to fantasize. The first fantasy was on the proto-elements of sound etc. (*sabda ādi tanmatras*) that define the characteristics of space and other elements. This was followed by imagination of the five sense organs that were capable of grasping them and later the five elements that were their percepts. Finally the gross substances were imagined to have formed from the admixture of the five elements.

A streak of sorrow originated in me then for the first time though I had been

free of any sort of sorrow till then. I began to get involved in transactions and interactions. I became contracted and constrained though my original thought was that I was the infinite world.

I conscientiously searched for reasons for such a development. I understood that it was just as natural to the mind to imagine a body etc. as movement is natural to the wind. This imaginative power for the mind came from the very power which was the source for the mind. Hence the mind lacked the capacity to control or arrest the power behind the unfolding of creation. That power is also called "The Law of Nature" or "The Power of *māya*."

Let me now tell you how the various organs came into existence. The mind that had formed looked like a speck of fire because Pure Consciousness was getting reflected in it. The speck of fire grew larger and converted into flames. Those flames constituted the gross body. A few orifices formed in the gross body. Two of them were useful for vision. These are the eyes. People say that eyes see. But several enabling factors like space, time, light and many other things are required for the eyes to be able to see. Whatever it is, because Consciousness is the *sine qua non* for the ability to cognize an object, it is "I" that has the experiential feeling of 'I see the object."

The onus of experiencing fell to my lot though the work is done through the nine orifices. My I-consciousness got reinforced with increasing experience. Along with it, my intellect and mind were strengthened. Earlier my mind thought of space only. Now there are plenty of new things to think about and to be in contact with. With that my memory too solidified.

With the mind-intellect-memory-I-consciousness in place, I became Antahkarana (inner organ). This is also called the *ātivāhika* (subtle) body.

As a matter of fact, I did not have any other body. But my mind kept on superimposing various forms. I was unable to arrest that force of continuous superimpositions.

Things went on like this for a considerable time. Eventually I had the experience of having the body of a Hiranyagarbha. Just like an infant cries after birth, I also felt like making a sound as soon as I got the new Hiranyagarbha body . The sound that came out of me was AUM, not very much different from the first sounds of an infant. Like a dreamer recapitulating the past experiences in his dream, I recollected *bhuh, bhuvah, suvah* etc., Gayatri mantra, the four Vedas and so on. I became the four-faced Brahma, the Creator. The fourteen worlds became my body. Thus was my mental world born. Strictly speaking there was nothing that truly existed there. Still, I saw everything as mirages. From an absolute viewpoint, I saw only Pure Consciousness everywhere. But by changing my perspective, I could visualize the world.

35. Unfolding of Creation from Yogi's Perspective

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki used in these descriptions the word "Plateau of the Earth" (*bhupīṭham*) instead of the earth. A description of the Plateau of the Earth went on from the 60th verse to the end in the 87th Sarga (13 verses) plus 23 more verses in the 88th Sarga. These provide very detailed depiction of the natural settings, events in life and other things that take place on the earth. Rama posed a question based on these descriptions.]

Rama: Revered Teacher! You have examined the earth in such great detail assuming the feeling "I am the earth." Is it the same earth composed of the five elements that everybody sees or is it of the type that we see in our dreams belonging to the mental world?

Vasishta: Do you ask this question from the perspective of the thought processes or from the standpoint of the Absolute? The answer to that question from the perspective of the thought processes is that the earth composed of the five elements had also originated from the thoughts in the mind. So it hardly needs an explanation as to what the earth is made up of — real solid stuff or diaphanous stuff like a dream.

From the standpoint of the Absolute, the answer is that any percept is nothing but transformationless transformation of Pure Consciousness! That being the case, there is no validity in dividing some parts to be gross and the other as dream world. In order that we may appreciate this fully, Chandogya Upanishad recommends a procedure.

The Earth, Fire and Water Gods arose from the God *Sat* (Beingness). Admixing of the three by the process of tri-plication (*trivrit karana*), the three elements, earth, fire and water formed. Earth is black. Water is white. Fire is red. Knowers of Truth identify the earth, fire and water components of any object from their respective hues. The earth has come from water, water from fire and fire from *Sat*.

An effect arises through a process of transformationless transformation. That means the change is just a name's sake. Therefore, it is unreal. Only the cause is real. Thus analyzing step by step and going back to the root cause, we find that the primary cause was *Sat*. Hence we may conclude that all transformed forms are basically *Sat*.

यथा सोम्यैकेन मृत्पिण्डेन सर्वं मृन्मयं विज्ञातꣳ स्याद्वाचारम्भणं
विकारो नामधेयं मृत्तिकेत्येव सत्यम् ——-
अपागादग्ने रग्नित्वं त्रीणि रूपानित्येव सत्यं

yathā somyaikena mṛtpiṇḍena sarvaṃ mṛnmayaṃ vijñātaꣳ syādvācārambhaṇaṃ
vikāro nāmadheyaṃ mṛttiketyeva satyam || —--------
apāgādagne ragnitvaṃ trīṇi rūpānityeva satyaṃ

Chandogyopanishad - 6

(The form taken by a substance after a 'changeless change' is only in name. Clay is real in the case of a pot… …. Similarly in the case of flames, fire water and earth are real since the flames have emerged from these three elements only.)

If you carefully follow the steps given by such statements as above in the Sixth Chapter of Chandogya Upanishad, you will not find anything like a mental world.

Rama, all that is seen is nothing but pure beingness from the perspective of Truth. Therefore, it is not legitimate to declare a part of it as physical and another part as mental. We discussed this issue several times already.

श्रुनोसि यदिदं चिरं *śrunosi yadidaṃ ciraṃ*

Sloka 14

I mentioned to you earlier very clearly that I assumed the form of the earth without leaving my True form of Consciousness-Self. Hence you may infer that I saw them all only as a witness.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 89.]

Rama: Gurudev! Did you happen to notice any other interesting things ?

Vasishta: When I assumed both the wakeful and dream state forms of the earth and witnessed what was going on, I saw myself as everything on the earth – I was the tree, the leaf of the tree, the veins in the leaf, the worm on the vein and even the juice that the worm was sucking!

Then I assumed the form of water. I became various rivers flowing from the mountain peaks to the valleys. I evaporated and became steam and rose above the trees. I became the taste in the water and entered the taste buds of the creatures. I experienced taste in them.

I observed creations in every atom similar to the ones I saw in the Hard Rock. Like the layers in the stem of a banana plant, there were countless creations within creations and also dissolutions. I could understand from what I saw that Consciousness-Self which was the substrate for all was not tainted in any way by the perceivables.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 90.]

Next I concentrated my mind on the thought "I am Fire." I attained the form of fire. The sun, moon, stars, Fire God and other luminescent objects became my organs. I did not notice darkness anywhere. Various colors like white, black, red originated from me. Because I had the form of the sun and moon as well as that of the lamps, I could see all the hidden stories of every household.

The quality of *tamas* is dominant in the netherworld. Hence the brilliance from my form was diminished there. Earth being dominant in *Rajas*, my brilliance got slightly enhanced on the earth. I shone with full brilliance in the Heavens because the quality *Satva* dominates there.

If you consider the world as a whole as one unit, however, it is like a dilapidated well. Water and darkness are ever present in it. The darkness gets kicked out sometimes by the brilliance of the Fire (*tejas*).

Every object is surrounded, as you are aware, by a veil of ignorance. The object is experienced by a seer only when that veil of ignorance is removed by Consciousness flowing out as a thought-wave related to that particular object.

[**Note:** This topic was elaborately dealt with in the second Chapter on the Behavior of a Seeker]

Likewise, *tejas* removes the veil of darkness and makes the objects visible to the eye. Therefore, elders describe *tejas* as the 'brother of Pure Consciousness.'

Taking the form of *tejas*, I became the luster in the precious stones and lightning in the clouds. I was the moonlight of the moon. I was the sexiness and the luring smile on the faces of young men and women. I was the courage in the wild beasts. I was the enmity between the gods and the demons. I was the energy and enthusiasm in creatures. I was the volcano in the oceans. I was also the fire of dissolution in some worlds. I was forest fire at some places and the fire of worship in the altar. I condensed as gold at other places.

[**Note:** Mythology holds that gold is a form of Fire God.]

I burnt the silos holding gold to ashes in some places. I was fire of sorrow for the owners of the burnt silos. I was the bone of contention for the scholars at some places and was the fire of insult at other places.

I shone sometimes as the unparalleled sun and moon. And at other times I was a lowly speck of fire trampled by people. I also hid myself for thousands of years deep inside the earth as highly valued diamonds and other precious stones.

Rama: Sir, did you experience happiness or sorrow when you were in the form of *tejas*?

Vasishta: I mentioned to you previously that I did not forego my form as the Supreme Brahman. I assumed all these different forms only as a witness. Why would I, who am a witness, lose my quality as the Supreme Brahman simply because I assumed a worldly form and watched the world just for fun? Hence, not an iota of sorrow was clinging to me.

If I were not to be in the form of Supreme Brahman and was only an inert fire, how could I have the feeling of experiencing? How could there be a recollection of what I experienced?

Rama: That's not a problem. Deep sleep is an inert state. Don't we have the experience of "I did not know anything during deep sleep"?

Vasishta: You seem to call the deep sleep state an inert state based on the experience of "I did not know anything then." But there was a definite experience in that state. That particular experience may be of the type as: "I did not know anything." But any experience can take place only if there is Consciousness. There cannot be any experience in an inert condition. Therefore, we cannot call the deep sleep state as inert.

Rama: Would you label "not knowing" also as an experience?

Vasishta: If it were not to be an experience, how are you able to recollect it later in your wakeful state? Hence we do have to accept "not knowing" to be an experience by itself. So we have to admit that Consciousness exists during a deep sleep state.

Once we understand that Consciousness underlies the three states of awake, dream and deep sleep without a break, it becomes obvious that Consciousness is independent of the state of the body. So, as the one who has the experience, I have only the subtle body of Consciousness and no gross body. There is no scope of any misery adhering to me. Unbound happiness is my true nature. With that experiential feeling of unbound happiness, I witnessed, assuming the form of *tejas,* the wide variety of worlds at the center of each of the subatomic particles.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 91.]

After that I took the form of wind. As an external wind, I moved trees and creepers. I carried the smells, clouds and airplanes. I dried moisture as fire would do. I entered into musical instruments and produced melodies. I put out small fires like lamps. I reinforced large fires like infernos. Though it was hard work for me, I gave relief to other hard working people. At the time of the Great Dissolution, I could lob even massive mountains as if they were dried leaves.

Entering into the bodies and the nerves of individuals, I gave mobility to their limbs. I helped their blood circulation. I helped in the growth of their seven root elements.

[**Note:** The seven root elements are: skin, blood, flesh, fat, bones, bone marrow and sperm). I rotated the sun and the moon. I gave mobility to the rivers.

स्पन्द पद्मवनादित्यः *spanda padmavanādityaḥ*

Sloka 14

In short, wherever there was some action, I was instrumental in getting it done.

Thus in the form of wind also, I witnessed different worlds in every subatomic particle. I saw worlds within the worlds of the subatomic particles. The series of worlds inside worlds inside worlds appeared as mosquitoes sitting on my colossal Virat form. Though I had such a huge infinite body, I did not forsake my subtle Consciousness-Self.

I could witness in detail many universes taking the form of each of the four fundamental elements. I enjoyed them all. I understood clearly that these are all illusory sceneries. I wondered if any of them existed at all when viewed from the perspective of Self-Knowledge. You may say that they exist or you may say they do not exist! If you view them from the magic wand of Consciousness, yes, they exist. They do not exist if you look at them from the stance of Pure Consciousness.

सर्वः सर्वत्र सर्वात्मा सर्वगः सर्वसंश्रयः ।
एतत्प्रबुद्धविषयमप्रबुद्धं न वेद्म्यहम् ।।

sarvaḥ sarvatra sarvātmā sarvagaḥ sarvasaṃśrayaḥ |
etatprabuddhaviṣayamaprabuddhaṃ na vedmyaham ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 92, Sloka 64

(Meaning: Everything that exists everywhere is Brahman. Everything is Consciousness-Self. Only that exists everywhere. That is the substratum for all. That is the Supreme Brahman. This is the state of Self-Realization. I do not know about the state of ignorance).

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 92.]

36. I Lost my Physical Body

Vasishta: Rama, after I thus saw a variety of worlds using the technique of concentrated thought, my curiosity was satiated. I wanted to get back to my cottage. I reached my old cottage after a long journey. But surprisingly, I could not find my physical body there. Instead, I found an unknown Sage in deep meditation in my cottage. From his appearance, I could understand that he was not an ordinary saint. I thought that he might have cremated my body. But I did not feel a loss. I felt it's okay. I did not feel any attachment with the cottage either. I wanted to go away to the world of the Seven Sages (constellation Great Bear) with my subtle body.

Hardly did I turn around with these thoughts in my mind, my cottage in space suddenly sublimated. The Sage sitting in it began to fall down to the earth.

Then I understood that the cottage took a concrete shape purely by virtue of my thoughts. It disappeared the moment I thought I did not need it. Empty space alone remained there. The Sage who took shelter in my cottage lost the support he had.

So he began to fall down. Normally a man would fall down with his head first. But the Sage was falling down vertically because he filled himself with life-breath under yogic process. I was curious to know what would happen to him. So I descended along with him. He reached the ground in a sitting posture.

I cannot say whether his body was as strong as a diamond or as light as cotton, but it was undamaged, though he fell down from a great height. He continued his meditation undisturbed.

That made me more curious. I used my thought power to create a deluge of rain with lightning and thunder and woke him up from his meditation. After he opened his eyes and relaxed a bit, I went to him and posed the following question:

"Sir, who are you? What have you been practicing? Your meditation was not disrupted though you fell down from such a great height!"

The stranger Sage looked a little confused. Slowly he composed himself and bowed to me. He said to me:

Stranger Sage: "Great Sage! I am able to recognize you though a little late. Please pardon me for the delay. My salutations to you. I am slowly recovering my memory. At one time I was an ordinary householder lost in the ways of the world. I am surprised how many foolish things I have done as a householder. After considerable time I achieved detachment by the grace of God."

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki devoted as many as sixty verses in conveying these few sentences of the Stranger Sage. He described in these verses how mean and meaningless were the processes in the world. We shall cite here a verse as an example:

जीर्यन्ते जीर्यतः केशा हुत्वा जीर्यन्ति जीर्यतः ।
क्षीयते जीर्यते सर्वं तृष्णैवैका न जीर्यते ।।

jīryante jīryataḥ keśā hutvā jīryanti jīryataḥ |
kṣīyate jīryate sarvaṃ tṛṣṇaivaikā na jīryate ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 93, Sloka 86

(Meaning: As the man ages, so does his hair. And also his teeth. All the organs too become old and shrunken. His desire however does not age!)

The message that comes out of the verses is that the worldly life is evanescent and that detachment is noble. We shall now continue with the narration of the Stranger Sage.]

Stranger Sage: "Revered Sage! After detachment took root in me, I studied yoga. I was in search of a lonely place in space. I found a vacant cottage and an unmoving body in it. I thought that a holy man left his body and obtained liberation. So I shifted the body to a side and sat down there in deep meditation. I did not know that it was your cottage and you went on a trip to different worlds for fun. Even Hiranyagarbha will not know the past, present and future unless he focuses his mind and examines things carefully. What to talk of a man like me? Please pardon me for my mistake or punish me as you deem fit."

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 93.]

Vasishta: (Addressing the Stranger Sage): "Maharishi! I share the blame for this fiasco. I did not expect that you would fall down . Otherwise, I would have thought of making the cottage more firm. What you said was true. It is difficult even for the best of Yogis to know the past, present and future unless they assess carefully. We are both at fault. So let us both excuse each other. Please get up; we shall freely roam around in the world of Siddhas (accomplished yogis who attained the status of gods)."

(Now addressing Rama): The stranger Sage accepted what I said. Both of us rocketed at once into space. After traveling together for some time, we parted our ways after bidding good bye to each other. I visited a few more worlds that I wanted to.

37. Relative Strengths of the Thoughts

Rama: Learned Teacher! You lost your physical body. With which body did you move around the worlds of the Siddhas?

Vasishta: Oh, Yes! I remember now. I went to the world of Indra first. I was in my mental body then. So no one there was able to recognize me. I could not hear their words. They could not hear my words. Neither the pillars nor the walls there could block my movement. Nor did I hit them.

Rama: How was that possible?

Vasishta: In the absence of your own experience, you have to understand these issues by conjecture only. The dream experiences may help you in your conjecture.

Rama: As it is, there are many controversial views on experiencing. For example, Scholars of the Doctrine of Logic opine that any knowledge is not possible in the absence of a body. That is why they hold that what exists in a state of deep sleep is not knowledge.

Vasishta: Your subjective experience is known to you only. This is inarguable.

[**Note:** The arguments presented below are based on what the Commentator, Shri ABS had written.]

There is now only a memory that you experienced happiness during the deep sleep phase. There cannot be a memory unless you were conscious. Therefore, we do not have to worry about the statement of Scholars of the Doctrine of Logic. We have from the Upanishads:

स्वप्ने शरीरमभिप्रहत्य असुप्तस्सुप्तानभिचाकसीति
शुक्रमादाय पनरेति स्थानं हिरण्मयः पुरुष एकाहम्सह्

svapne śarīramabhiprahatya asuptassuptānabhicākasīti
śukramādāya panareti sthānaṃ hiraṇmayaḥ puruṣa ekāhamsah

Br.a. adhya 4, Brhm,anam 3, Mantra 11

(Meaning: Attachment to the body is lost during the dream state. But the individual, without leaving the Consciousness-Self, illuminates the dream objects because of the impressions (*vasanas*). Later he gathers back the elements of the senses and shifts to the wakeful state. The individual ever remains conscious. He moves in all the three states. He is one only.)

The above scriptural words clearly indicate that Consciousness exists even when there is no body.

I had my own experience to substantiate it. I lost my body when Emperor Nimi cast a spell of curse on me. As a result, I faced many problems. I sought the help of God Brahma and took refuge in the body that was born to Mitra and Varun.

The Vedic statement and my own experience support what I stated. Therefore, we may ignore the view of those Scholars.

Rama: Sir, you say that the gods in Indra's world did not recognize you in the absence of your gross body. I wonder how the Stranger Sage was able to see you.

Vasishta: Because of the yogic accomplishments obtained by him as well as myself. Both of us have the capacity to realize on ground what we conceive. I had a thought at that time that the Sage should be able to see me. He too had a similar thought. Hence he could see me.

Rama: Suppose the two Yogis conceive thoughts contrary to each other?

Vasishta: Whosoever has a stronger Yogic power wins.

Rama: In case both are of equal power?

Vasishta: The thoughts of both of them will be realized. I shall take up this issue in the later cantos. Let us now proceed with the story on hand. I moved around a few cities in the world of Indra. During my tour I felt concerned about some immediate problem. Consequently I forgot for a little while that I was moving in my subtle body. Or to put it differently, I forgot that my roving form was only an 'idea.'

Ghosts are made up of subtler stuff than humans. So they are not visible to human beings. But Gods can see them. I had a body that is finer than that of the gods. So I was invisible like a ghost in the world of Indra.

Rama: Sir! Do ghosts really exist ? Are there different varieties in them? What traditions do they follow? What are their thoughts like? Will you please explain?

Vasishta: I shall briefly respond to you because you raised these questions based on what I said.

Yes, ghosts do exist. Just as you have dream bodies, they have mental bodies. Your wakeful world is visible to them. They can enter the minds of people and create many kinds of fears and fantasies. They can take possession of the bodies through the minds and depending on the relationships, they may even devour the flesh and blood. They may sometimes kill their host. The shapes and powers of the ghosts differ a lot depending on the impressions carried from their past births. Even if they do not possess a gross body, they are still subjected to the effects of heat and cold. Desires, fears, anger etc. are normal to all of them.

मन्त्रौषधतपोदानधैर्यधर्मवशीकृताः ।।

mantrauṣadhatapodānadhairyadharmavaśīkṛtāḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 94, Sloka 38

There are several methods by which one can see them and control them. Mantras, medicines, austerities, donations, courage, fortitude etc. are some of the ways and means for that.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki used 55 slokas for a description of the ghosts.] As I said, my condition was like a ghost in the world of Indra.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 94.]

38. No Gross Body Even Today

Vasishta: Later on I thought that all those in the Indra's world should be able to see me. With that thought of mine, they were able to see me and recognize me. A surprising thing ensued with this. I appeared to some of them as a plant sprouting in their front yards. They called me Parthiv Vasishta. Some others saw me as dropping out of the sun rays. They called me Tejas Vasishta. Yet others found me floating in the air. They named me Vayu Vasishta. Those who found me rising out of water referred to me as Jala Vasishta.

I acquired many different names. I went through different experiences. Even then, I never felt that any of those bodies belonged to me. Nor did I think I was those bodies. There was no break in remembering myself as Consciousness-Self.

Not only then, even today I am Pure Consciousness-Space. I appear with a physical body to the onlookers like you depending on your mental constructs. All these creations were merely mentations for me. Similarly, for Hiranyagarbha, the entire universe is Consciousness-Self.

महारामायणप्रायशास्त्रप्रेक्षणमात्रतः ।

mahārāmāyaṇaprāyaśāstraprekṣaṇamātrataḥ |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 95, Sloka 29

This discriminating wisdom can be obtained only from a study of a scripture like Yoga Vasishta.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 95.]

Rama, we reached the end of the Story of Hard Rock. The story proves the following point:

न च स्थितं किंचनापि क्वचनापि कदाचन ।
स्थितं ब्रह्मघने ब्रह्म यथास्थितमखण्डितम् ।।

na ca sthitaṃ kiṃcanāpi kvacanāpi kadācana |
sthitaṃ brahmaghane brahma yathāsthitamakhaṇḍitam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 96, Sloka 2

No object whatsoever exists anytime anywhere. Brahman alone exists seamlessly within Itself.

The dreamer is Consciousness. The hills and vales seen in the dream are also Consciousness. There is nothing different from Consciousness anywhere in the dream. We seem to see 'things' even though there is no 'thing.' The wakeful world is also exactly like that. From creation to Dissolution 'what is' is Infinite Brahman.

चितिरेकास्ति नो सर्गो हेमास्ति न तदूर्मिका ।
स्वप्नाचले चिदेवास्ति न तु काचन शैलता ।।

citirekāsti no sargo hemāsti na tadūrmikā |
svapnācale cidevāsti na tu kācana śailatā ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 96, Sloka 8

(Meaning: Pure Consciousness alone is. There is no creation at all. Gold is; but there is nothing like a ring. The mountain in the dream consists of Consciousness only, not mountain-ness.)

I narrated the Story of Hard Rock only to convey the above Truth. Truth has been established. I shall further elaborate the same.

[**Note**: Sage Vasishta spent the beginning part of this book on Methods of Seeking, Progressive Steps in Seeking etc. Next he explained that it was not merely the four fundamental elements (like earth etc.) but also the elements like space etc. were forms of Consciousness. In order to establish this truth, he portrayed in considerable detail the Story of the Hard Rock dealing with a variety of creations and dissolutions.

The Sage once again, as typical of him, provided a review of the salient points of the story after it was completed. He proved, adopting different approaches in the 96th Sarga, the fact that the world was not created. Sage Vasishta conveys to us in multiple ways that an object appears though it has no Beingness. However, we do not usually come across the word "changeless-change (vivarta)" in the original text, though what is implied is the same.

The Sage explains ignorance one more time to answer the question: "Why do we seemingly see some 'thing' even though there is no 'thing'." He narrates the long Story of Vipaschit (extending to over 55 Sargas) to illustrate this point. The story begins at the 108th Sarga.

The twelve Sargas from 96 to 107 are an introduction to the Story of Vipaschit. The first 42 verses of the 96th Sarga provide a summary of the earlier story.

The central theme of the story is that all there is in the world is Consciousness only; hence no one is born or dead. Everyone gets the thought, "I am Consciousness" all by oneself. If we admit that a man is dead, it amounts to admitting that Consciousness died. Then there is no scope for anyone to be alive once Consciousness is dead. Obviously this cannot be correct. Therefore, no one dies. And because no one dies, there is no one born either. This is quite a counterintuitive argument that is introduced by Sage Vasishta. Finally he makes a whacky claim:

न तदस्ति न यत्सत्यं न तदस्ति न यन्मृषा ।
यद्यथा येन निर्णीतं तत्तथा तं प्रति स्थितम् ।।

na tadasti na yatsatyaṃ na tadasti na yanmṛṣā |
yadyathā yena nirṇītaṃ tattathā taṃ prati sthitam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 96, Sloka 41

There is nothing that is not true. There is also nothing that is not untrue. Whoever decides in whatever way, it will be like that for him.

Here ends the Sarga 96.

39. Introduction to The Story of Vipaschit

Vasishta: Rama, everybody in the world has his/her own experience. That is the reason for the growth of divergent theories regarding Truth. No one theory can be denied.

[**Note:** Without giving any names, the theories of Kaṇāda, Gautama, Soutrantika, Vaiseshika, Arhata and Carvaka were discussed here. A direct mention of Buddhism was made.]

If one ties down oneself to a particular concept, everything appears to him in tune with that conception. It is like the saying that when you are holding a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Hence it is important not to commit oneself to any specific theory. It is advisable to explore in depth all the facets of a theory through discussions with Pundits in that field. One need not entertain a doubt regarding the availability of experts. Though they are rare, quite a number of them can still be found in each school of thought.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 97.]

A typical characteristic of the Pundits is that the defects of desire, anger etc. would have considerably abated in them. They are usually peaceful.

न नास्तिक्यान्न चास्तिक्यात्कष्टानुष्ठानवैदिकाः ।
मनोज्ञमधुराचाराः प्रियपेशलवादिनः ।।

na nāstikyānna cāstikyātkaṣṭānuṣṭhānavaidikāḥ |
manojñamadhurācārāḥ priyapeśalavādinaḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 98, Sloka 3

Pundits do not obstinately adhere to rigid routines either due to blind belief or non-belief. They are gentle and soft-spoken. They are helpful to others. Develop friendship with such people after closely examining them.

I do not also mean to say that those learned people are totally free of any shortcoming.

दोषलेशमनादृत्य नित्यं सेवेत सज्जनम् ।
स्थूलदोषं त्वनिर्वाणं शनैः परिहरेत्क्रमात् ।

doṣaleśamanādṛtya nityaṃ seveta sajjanam |
sthūladoṣaṃ tvanirvāṇaṃ śanaiḥ pariharetkramāt |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 98, Sloka 20

(Meaning: Follow such noble people not minding the minor defects that they may have. In case you find out later that the man has no true Knowledge and has many shortcomings, slowly desert him).

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 98.]

Rama: Teacher! Human beings like us may take recourse to association with noble people etc. We may be able to obtain happiness from them. But what will happen to worms, insects and such others who lack these opportunities? How do they get rid of sorrow and secure happiness?

Vasishta: There is not much of a difference between human beings and others like worms, insects, plants etc. in the matter of experiencing the pairs of opposites like happiness and sorrow.

सुप्तानां यादृगस्माकं वेदनं स्पष्टसुत्वचाम् ।
वृक्षगुल्माङ्कुरादीनां तादृगुद्दामवेदनम् ।।

suptānāṃ yādṛgasmākaṃ vedanaṃ spaṣṭasutvacām |
vṛkṣagulmāṅkurādīnāṃ tādṛguddāmavedanam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 99, Sloka 16

(Meaning: We have sensitive skin. We feel miserable when mosquitoes bite and feel happy if a cool breeze blows even though we may be asleep. Trees, creepers, plants etc. too possess this type of awareness of happiness and sorrow).

Birds and animals which have a slightly more developed sensory system experience pain and pleasure just like us.

सुखतश्चेन्द्रकीटयोः *sukhataścendrakīṭayoḥ*

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 99, Sloka 18

(Meaning: The fact of having happiness is the same either for Indra or for a worm).

The condition of stones etc. is akin to trees in deep sleep.

निद्रामयानां वृक्षाणां स्वसत्तामचलादयः ।

nidrāmayānāṃ vṛkṣāṇāṃ svasattāmacalādayaḥ |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 99, Sloka 21

The point to be noted is that though all types of creatures do experience happiness and sorrow to some extent, there is no possibility for any creature other than humans to have discrimination.

Hence an inquiry about the reality or otherwise of the world is prescribed only for the human beings.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 99.]

Rama: Gurudev! There are, say, some utter atheists. There is no death according to them because we cannot see it. That being the case, where is the question of a debate on rebirth and liberation for them? Is there a way out of the sorrow of the world for such atheists?

Vasishta: A very subtle issue is involved here. Howsoever atheistic they may be, whatsoever may be their argument regarding the identity of the body and Consciousness, the body cannot be the reason for their theory of body-Consciousness identity. Why do I say that? Because the body is an inert substance. They have to accept that the body-Consciousness identity is derived from Consciousness only.

Thus they are in regular touch with Consciousness. They should be encouraged thus to begin an inquiry into Consciousness. Then they will have an opportunity to end their ignorance and attain permanent bliss.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 100.]

Those that are able to eliminate their ignorance and realize the all pervading Consciousness will not have any fear of sorrow or death and will forever be happy.

In fact nobody needs to be scared of death. Death is the last stage of the journey for an absolute non-believer. Hence there is no need for him to be afraid of death. The person who thinks that the world is void or evanescent also need not be scared of death. If a person believes in rebirth, he too has no reason to be afraid of death because there is a guarantee of rebirth for him. If one is afraid of going to hell after death and somehow manages to escape it, he has anyway to experience the effects of his sins right in this world. Overall there is no reason at all to be afraid of death.

Therefore, human beings should avoid worrying about death and cultivate the habit of self-inquiry. They will then be free of all fears.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 101.]

Rama: Sir, will you please describe to us the characteristics of an individual who attained the Supreme Knowledge about which you taught us ?

[**Note:** The characteristics of a *jīvanmukta* were discussed three or four times in the earlier Chapters. It was stated in the previous occasions that the purpose behind providing a list of the qualities of a *jīvanmukta* was to inspire emulation of these qualities. If one cultivates them with determination and effort, Self realization would be attainable though such qualities do not generate it by themselves.

The topic is brought up once again here with the same objective. Several crucial aids to help a spiritual aspirant are given in the 62 verses of the 102nd Sarga. The Sarga also exhaustively deals with doubts that come to the mind of a normal seeker. We shall briefly present below the salient issues.]

Vasishta: What should I say, Rama! Self-realized people are quite a peculiar lot. They seem to function normally from outside. But they never do anything from inside. They may appear very sympathetic. But in their hearts of hearts, they hardly have any sympathy. Because they are free of dualities, they seem to have no kindness. Their kindness emanates from their quality of *satva*. They do not hope for anything. But they apparently live with hope. They behave as householders and also as renunciates.

Rama: Is it possible to identify any JIvanmukta with the qualities described by you? The sort of qualities listed by you can be feigned by any charlatan. How then can one recognize a Self-realized man?

Vasishta: Please do not worry about fraudsters. Even if one feigns these qualities over a long time, he will slowly get habituated to them and eventually he will achieve Self-Realization. If one can force oneself to practice such qualities without pretension, he will obtain self-Realization much sooner.

It is true, though, it is difficult to identify a genuinely Self-realized man. We may however generalize one aspect. Most commonly JIvanmuktas do not like to advertise themselves, their knowledge or detachment. On the other hand, they may even try to hide these!

It is also not possible to detect a JIvanmukta from the miracles they perform. A resolute individual trying hard to acquire special accomplishments may obtain miracle powers even in the absence of achieving Self-Knowledge. A truly knowledgeable man may not have any such powers of performing miracles. We cannot also say that all JIvanmuktas will be either ascetics or deep meditators. They can be householders or businessmen. There are no restraining conditions stipulating their behavior.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga102.]

We have to probe deeply into what Consciousness is in order to achieve Self-realization. I established already beyond doubt numerous times that Consciousness is eternal, all pervading, undivided and does not depend on anything. A good means of internalizing this is through this noble scriptural text called Maharamayana. No book is superior to this on this subject. It is our nature to teach this to eligible students like you. The gist of my instruction is:

स्वयंभ्वाख्यं शरीरं स्वं पूर्वः स्वप्नो महाचितेः ।
इत उत्थानास्तदनु स्वप्नात्स्वप्नान्तरं वयम् ।।

svayaṃbhvākhyaṃ śarīraṃ svaṃ pūrvaḥ svapno mahāciteḥ |
ita utthānāstadanu svapnātsvapnāntaraṃ vayam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 103, Sloka 85

Hiranyagarbha or the Self-created is the first dream of the Cosmic Consciousness. All of us have descended from him like a dream within a dream.

There was, say, a swelling on the throat. The swelling turned to a boil. The boil developed to be an abscess. Strictly speaking none of them were apart from the throat. Still they seem to be different from each other. Similarly, all of us seem to be separate from one another. That is the reason why our mind is unable to merge in the Supreme Brahman in spite of all the effort.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 103.]

We are ourselves a part of a dream. We also have a dream. We think that our wakeful and dream worlds are different. But they are actually like twins born out of the same mother's womb. The mother is ignorance.

The same Consciousness appears both in the wakeful and dream states. There is no difference between awake and dream states.

[**Note:** Here end the Sargas 104 and 105.]

Rama: Revered Sir! If wakeful and dream worlds are not different, why do we experience them to be different? As far as I can understand, the seer is different from the seen. The seer in the dream is distinct from what he sees. The seer and the seen are also different in the wakeful world of the dreamer. This is the common experience for all of us. But using logic and citing appropriate examples, you proved that no such differences existed. You also established that the seer, seen, wakeful world and dream world were all Pure Consciousness. Yet why is it that we are unable to see things in that way?

Vasishta: To put it bluntly, the reason is your ideation.

आस्वयंभुव एवेयं चिन्मात्रे भाति सर्गभाः ।
परिज्ञाता सती सा तु ब्रह्मैव भवति क्षणात् ।। ४९
एषैव त्वपरिज्ञाता भ्रान्तिर्मायेति कथ्यते ।
जगदित्युच्यते विद्या दृश्यमित्युपवर्ण्यते ।।

āsvayaṃbhuva eveyaṃ cinmātre bhāti sargabhāḥ |
parijñātā satī sā tu brahmaiva bhavati kṣaṇāt || 49
eṣaiva tvaparijñātā bhrāntirmāyeti kathyate |
jagadityucyate vidyā dṛśyamityupavarṇyate ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 103, Sloka 85

Misapprehension of the only existing Pure Consciousness as the world extends right up to Hiranyagarbha. If one realizes this, that very illusory creation will be Supreme Brahman. If it is not understood, the illusion continues. The scriptures call it Maya. Pundits call it nescience. It is called the world by people. Ignorant folk call it the perceivables.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 106.]

If one can comprehend this, all the visible five elements like earth etc. which are perceived will be known to be none other than Pure Consciousness. There is hardly any difference between the awake and dream worlds at that stage. That is the reason that we call the entire world a dream.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 107.]

Rama: You say that unless ignorance is eradicated, the illusory feeling that 'the world is real' will not be eliminated. How long will the ignorance persist? In what form does it exist? How and when does it go away?

Vasishta: The five elements continue to exist as long as ignorance lasts. As long as the five elements continue, the world will last. Ignorance is unending when viewed from the position of those who are afflicted by it.

Ignorance is as perpetual to them as the Supreme Brahman is. I shall tell you The Story of King Vipaschit so that you may understand the issue clearly.

40. The Story of King Vipaschit

Somewhere in a little corner of the vast space in the universe, there was a cluster of three worlds very much like our three worlds. There was also an island resembling our Jambu dwipa. Tatamiti was a megacity in that island. King Vipaschit was its ruler.

[**Note:** Tatamiti means 'having vast dimensions.']

The word Vipaschit means exceptionally knowledgeable. The Sanskrit derivation is:

विशेषेन पश्यान चेतत इति विपश्चित *viśeṣena paśyāna cetata iti vipaścita*

(Who acts only after a meticulous examination.)

King Vipaschit was a highly learned scholar. He was a very courageous and capable monarch. He was fond of the Fire God. His devotion to and worship of the Fire God bettered as he aged.

One day a spy coming from the east informed him as follows:

"Great King ! The satrap appointed by you on the east coast to protect the Kingdom suddenly died with high fever. The Satrap of the south learnt this news and invaded the eastern part so that he could annex it to his part. But the public at large in the east opposed him. Taking advantage of the situation, the enemy Kings who were forced to lie low so far, mustered up enough courage, pillaged the country and killed the southern satrap.

"Coming to know of these developments, the Satrap appointed by you in the

West began to march towards the war zone boasting that he would vanquish all of the enemies. But the enemy Kings of the east and south joined forces and killed him en route. I managed somehow to save myself to reach here."

Hardly did the spy finish his words, another informant came running. He spoke nervously: "Lord ! All your enemy forces united and invaded the Satrap in the north. He was terribly scared and ran away with his army. Now he is entering our city."

King Vipaschit was very upset. He immediately called his army commanders and ordered them to prepare themselves for the war. At that very moment, the northern Satrap entered the court profusely bleeding and with arrows all over his body. He saluted the King and warned him of the chase by the enemy troops.

While the King was consoling him, another messenger rushed in to say that the enemies had already crossed the walls of the city and the army and the ministers were engaged in fighting them. The King boosted the morale of all and asked them to be ready with their plans. He begged for an excuse to have a bath and left for his private quarters.

The King had a bath and went to the worship hall having the fire altar. He invoked Fire God and prayed to him thus:

"Oh God! With your grace and blessings, I could alone fight and conquer all the four quarters in my prime time. I successfully established an empire. I crushed all my foes with an iron hand. Now my youth and vigor have dwindled. Seizing the opportunity, the enemies have entered right into my city. It is difficult for me to overpower them now. It is worthless to live after being defeated. So I decide to behead myself and offer my head to you. If you are merciful to me, please give me not one but four new bodies. I shall proceed with these new bodies in the four directions and reestablish my empire until the coast line on each side."

So the King Vipaschit whipped up the fire in the altar, bent forward and chopped his head off. The head dropped straight into the altar. The surprising thing was that not only his head, his body too got burnt in the fire. No sooner had the head and body turned to ashes in that holy altar than four King Vipaschit-s emerged from the altar. The four Kings had necessary powers of warfare and also the required divine weaponry.

The four Kings bowed to the Fire God and jumped into the war. The enemies could not stand the might of the four Kings. They ran away out of the city and scurried towards their respective countries. Each of the four King Vipaschit-s chased them in the four directions. Each of the four King Vipaschit-s established their rule until the coastline in their respective directions and decided to stay for a while to govern the land. Each of the four Kings personally toured around their respective Kingdoms and visited important places savoring the natural beauty.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki's perceptive and sensitive style of writing reaches

remarkable heights here. He incorporated the names of the countries of the day, the names of different sects of people, geographic information, details on the traditions and culture of the people. These Sargas are an invaluable source for detailed study of the social conditions of the times. (We shall not, however, enter into these aspects as our principal interest is with respect to philosophy.)

The content of the different Sargas is as follows:

Sargas 110 & 111 — Description of the war.
Sarga 112 — Retreat of the Enemy.
Sarga 113 — Description of the Sea.
Sarga 114 to 120 — Description of the Important places in the four directions.

There is also a reason why Sage Valmiki devoted so many sections to a description of the variety and beauty in nature. It shows how varied and absorbing can be the illusory world whose genesis lies in ignorance. It also declares in unequivocal terms that such enchanting and scenic settings are nothing but a mesmerizing phantasmagoria!

The Sage used a similar technique to portray in an elaborate and captivating manner the episode of war in the story of Leela. Finally he said through the words of Goddess Saraswati that the horrific war was no more than a fantasy. He adopts the same technique once again in the story of King Vipaschit.]

41. Desire to See the Boundaries of The World in Four Directions

Vasishta: Rama, thus did the four King Vipaschit-s who emerged out of one body go in four directions. But the thoughts of the four Kings were the same as they moved towards the shorelines in each of the four directions. They re-established their rule and also enjoyed the beauty of nature along their way. Each had a different part of the world to view; each had his own experience of joy; each had his own feeling of wonder; and each had his own experience of happiness. The four Kings watched with unwavering focus the never ending ebb and tide of the swirling waves relaxing at the beaches in their respective Kingdoms. Though their experiencing was separate, their thoughts had one common thread as follows:

"I could come to these faraway places using the divine and powerful chariot thanks to the blessings bestowed by the Fire God. Where was the capital city and where is this coast! How many strange things did I witness en route! I wonder how far this ocean extends. What would be there if I could reach the other side?

"Elders speak of the island Plaksha if we can cross the saline waters of the sea. They say that Plaksha Island is twice as big as this. After that comes the Sea of Sugarcane Juice. Then one more island and after that another sea and so on. According to them there are a total of seven seas and seven islands.

कियती स्यात्प्रविस्तीर्णा दृश्यश्रीरियमातता ।

kiyatī syātpravistīrṇā dṛśyaśrīriyamātatā |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 121, Sloka 7

How big would be this extensive and expansive bounty of nature? What would be beyond all the islands ?

कियती कीदृशी वा स्यान्मायेयं चेत्यरूपिणी ।

kiyatī kīdṛśī vā syānmāyeyaṃ cetyarūpiṇī |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 121, Sloka 8

māya appears here as objects. In what form would this illusory *māya* appear there? How large would it be?

"I should find out all these things by myself. I pray to the Fire God for this."

The four Kings Vipaschit-s thought thus in the same way. All of them worshipped the Fire God in the same way at the same time. Fire God was pleased by their prayers. He split himself into four and materialized before each of them at the same time. He asked them to express their wish.

The boon desired by all the four Vipaschit-s was the same!

"Lord of the gods! I want to witness the boundary of the perceptible world composed of the five fundamental elements. Kindly show me what all can be seen by this gross body made up of the five elements. Please show me what cannot be witnessed by this body by granting a special body for me. Please show me whatever remains to be seen beyond its capability by creating a subtler (mental) body for me. Kindly show me the physical, causal and subtler worlds. This is the only wish I have.

"Lord! You know everything. I want to see with this body all the things that only accomplished yogis can see. After that I shall see with my mind. I hear that when we move along the paths by which the accomplished yogis move, the gross body drops down and we die. May I not face such a situation! May my journey be successful!"

The Fire God granted the desired boon to each of the four Kings. Next morning each of the Kings readied themselves to go on their mission to cross the seas at their respective places. But their respective ministers protested. The ministers feared that the journey was beset with danger. Some of the nobles in the court begged them to drop the plan. But the Kings did not concede. They cajoled the people and promised to return soon. Thus did they take up their journey.

The four Kings attained divine powers with the blessing of Fire God when

they reached the sea shores of their respective kingdoms. They could walk over the waters like they walked on land. Their retinue, however, stayed back. Each King proceeded alone by himself. They moved forward crossing the waves as if they climbed hills. They crossed whirlpools floating over them like a piece of straw. Huge crocodiles swallowed them but threw them up as they could not be digested by the animal. When they felt a bit tired, they used to relax lying over the water waves. The four kings experienced many novel and strange situations during their journey.

A crocodile captured the eastern king. Struggling to free himself from the beast, both he and the croc reached the estuaries of the Ganges river. He hit the animal hard against the ground. The force of the recoil pushed him to Kanyakubj. He went from there to the sea again and traveled to Krauncha Island. A demon in the island gulped him. But he tore open the stomach of the demon and came out. Seeing the valor of the king, the locals desired that he should be their king too.

He ruled over the land for eight years and resumed his journey. He reached Mount Meru. He was ensnared by a nymph on the northern side of Mount Meru and spent a decade with her. Later he resumed his travels and went to the Milky Ocean. He was captivated by the beauty of the divine girls there. He stayed with them for seventy years.

The southern king could travel till the Sea of Sugar Juice without any problems. He then reached the land of divine Yakshas. He succumbed there to the spell of a damsel, Yakshi, who took a fancy for him. Being madly in love with her he forgot himself and moved around aimlessly. He had to face the wrath of king Daksha at one place. As a result of the curse given by King Daksha, he had to spend a hundred years in the Saka Islands. He was relieved of the curse by the grace of the God of Fire.

The southern king was swallowed by a fish that thought itself to be a goddess. But it could not digest him and threw up. By God's blessing he captured an eagle. He crossed the Sea of Salt riding on its back and reached the Salmali Islands. He learnt the techniques of bird capture there. He spent ten years playing with birds. From there he went to Mount Mandara and spent a day with a celestial lady.

The northern king went to an island which was the resort of Lord Shiva and his consort. He worshipped them there. He received special powers like Anima etc. (see Glossary) with their blessings. As he proceeded out of that island, he discovered a land of gold. A Yogi who converted that land into gold was annoyed by the trespassing by the king and changed him into a stone statue. With the grace of the Fire God, the Yogi took pity on the king and freed him from the curse after about a hundred years.

[**Note:** Thus we see that the four Vipaschit-s, though started with the same desire, their experiences gradually diversified resulting in a variance in their wants. Here ends the Sarga 123.]

42. If One Man Becomes Four, Wouldn't They Think Alike?

Rama: Sir, the individual (*jīva*) for the four Vipaschit-s is the same. Their original

body was also one. How is it then that they had different wants?

Vasishta: Suppose a person had a dream. He identifies himself with one of the bodies appearing in the dream. He thinks some of the other bodies are his enemies. He finds some to be indifferent. The individuals within those bodies have their own thoughts. They follow their own actions. But where did all these individuals come from ? Have they not all originated from the one dreamer? So it is not necessary that the individuals arising from one body should have the same thoughts. You should also consider why the daughter-individuals originated from the original individual. It is because of the balance of karma of the original individual. It is quite common for each of the daughter-individuals to be different from one another depending on the residual karma of the original individual.

We had referred several times in the past to the fact that the world originated as a dream of Hiranyagarbha who was the first individual in this creation. We see the variety of individuals in the world depending on the residual karma of Hiranyagarbha.

But what exactly is the appearance of individuals? The appearance is the reflection of Consciousness-Self in the mirror of Consciousness itself.

Rama: How is it possible for Consciousness to reflect in Consciousness?

Vasishta: Don't you have a mirror reflecting another mirror ? Each of the two has its own entity. Both the mirrors can reflect objects as well as reflections of the objects from other mirrors. Now what is a reflection?

Say, a mirror reflects a mountain. That means the mirror contains within it a peculiar space capable of holding within itself a reflected image of the mountain. Hence a reflection is nothing but showing a form that is external to itself as if the form is contained within itself.

Suppose the sky along with clouds, stars and the moon is reflected in the mirror. Does it not look to you as if the peculiar space within the mirror possesses a special capacity to enclose within itself the physical space having clouds, stars etc. as well? Just as the sky-star-cloud-space is reflected in the mirror-space, it is not impossible for Pure Consciousness which possesses within Itself the peculiar capacity (adjunct) called *māya* to reflect counterintuitive forms. That is the reason why the reflected world, which is the same in substance as Consciousness, seems to be different from Consciousness.

Rama: Whatever may be the capacity of *māya*, how can the very same substance appear both to be identical with as well as different from something else at the same time?

Vasishta: You are trying to reject separation within the Supreme Brahman which is Pure Consciousness. That is quite okay. It would imply though that you admit of no

divisions within Brahman. But the Truth is that the Supreme Brahman is beyond divisibility and indivisibility. When Maya is the adjunct, it is not possible to lay any specific limiting conditions on the traits of Brahman.

A man is able to see himself both as one and many during his dreams. Similarly, the four King Vipaschit-s also were able to experience a variety of objects and the consequent happiness and sorrow in the four directions simultaneously in accordance with the maturation of their karma. We do not have to really enter into the detailed pedantic debates. Take for example the Sages like Agastya and others. They could create several bodies for themselves using their Yogic powers. They were able to experience the effects of their past actions with these different bodies simultaneously. Lord Vishnu and many more Gods too resort to this way of expending their karma through many bodies. The four Kings also adopted the same method. In order to make things much clearer, I shall narrate a few more details of their story.

Occasionally the four kings helped each other in addition to experiencing the polar pair of opposites each separately by himself. For example, the eastern King came under the spell of a Yaksha when he was roaming around the Udayadri Mountain Range in Saka Islands. He had to spend seven years sleeping under that curse. He drank some potion available in that area mistaking it to be water. The potion had the quality of converting any person consuming it into a stone. As the King drank the potion, he became a stone. He had to spend another seven years as a stone.

When the King could come out of the curse, he went to an area called Shantabhaya. He was the target there for the anger of an ascetic. He was converted to a tree. He remained like that for another seventy years. The western King came to know of the plight of the eastern King. The western King approached the ascetic and begged him to pardon the eastern King. The ascetic taught a remedial mantra to the western King. Using the mantra, he freed the eastern King.

The eastern King then went to the Mountain Daivataka. A yaksha changed the King into a lion, kept him for ten days and released him. Later he reached Mount Meru. A ghost in the caves of Meru changed him into a frog and kept him for ten years. From there he went to a region called Kaumara. There was a mountain called Nilagiri. While he was moving there, he slipped, fell down into a well and lost sight. He spent a hundred years as a blind man for a hundred years.

The western King came under the control of a ghost in the caves of Mount Astadri. He spent a month under her spell. Later he went to a place where he could study the techniques of Vidhyadharas. He became a Vidhyadhara and spent fourteen years in cardamom gardens. Then he went to a region called Sisira. A master ghost cursed him and converted him to a stone. The southern King approached the master ghost and freed the western King. The western King came under the curse of another ghost and was converted into a bull. The southern King once again saved him.

The southern King himself once became a ghost. The western King came to

his rescue and freed him after praying to a Yaksha. The western King saved the eastern King when the latter was converted to a lion on the hills of Kesar.

Rama: Sir, you said that Sages like Agastya could assume many bodies and exhaust the residual karma at one time. Is this the case with the four Vipaschit-s also?

Vasishta: Rama! Sages like Agastya were liberated and were JIvanmuktas. They were totally unbound and could perform the works merely by thought. Happiness or sorrow won't affect them. The four Vipaschit-s were not at such a stage. They could get their wishes fulfilled by the grace of Fire God because of their prayer to Him. The four Kings were in the second stage of the Sevenfold Knowledge Path. The world is like a colorful rainbow for them. For a truly realized man, there is no difference between a rainbow and the rays of the sun. The colors in a rainbow do not have any 'beingness' of their own apart from the sun rays. JIvanmukta is one who realizes that the constituent particles of the world are like the colors in a rainbow. All others, even if they may have been worshipping gods, are just normal folk!

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 125.]

43. Desire to Witness Ignorance

Rama: I could understand that now. Do you like to continue with the story of the four Kings, Sir?

Vasishta: In course of time, each of the Kings died. Death came to each of them in a different way. The course of the subsequent births too differed for each. The eastern King died while fighting an elephant which was in heat. It happened on Mount Varshseema on the Krauncha Islands. He tried to stop the elephant when it was destroying the hill and the woods. The King was crushed to pieces.

Rama: But Sir, The Fire God blessed them to have no death. How is it that the King was dead?

Vasishta: If you remember, Rama, the Kings asked a boon to be free from death within the lands where accomplished yogis moved. The Fire God agreed for that. The four Kings now went far beyond those lands. Hence each one of them faced death.

Rama: That's true. Please tell me what happened next.

Vasishta: The southern King got into a fight with a demon. The demon broke his bones and threw them into a huge fire.

The western King made friends with Vidhyadhara. The Vidhyadhara took him to Heaven. The King did not pay respects to the Lord of gods, Indra. Indra was very furious and burnt him to ashes.A crocodile captured the northern King as he was crossing a river. The animal cut him to eight pieces.

After the four Kings were dead, their consciousnesses merged with space. The space-like consciousnesses noticed an earth within that very space owing to the

past impressions stored in it. That earth was very similar to our earth. It has the seven islands, rivers, forests, sun and other planets and so on. Surprisingly the four Kings found on that land their old bodies. That means, the four Kings experienced, by the power of past tendencies present within them, the grossness and inertness of a physical body. Each of them had a feeling that, "Yes, I now have a gross body." They could understand that such an idea was the result of ignorance. Still they could not get rid of the thought. A desire took place in them to investigate the strength of ignorance. So they resumed their journey. By the grace of the Fire God their journey proceeded without any hindrance.

The western King crossed the seven seas and the seven islands and found an island of gold. There he met by luck Lord Vishnu. He worshipped the Lord and learnt Self-Knowledge from Him. He remained there in Samadhi for five years and attained liberation.

The eastern King traveled to the moon. He worshipped the moon and could partially dissolve himself into the moon.

Rama: Teacher! How was that possible? A single King Vipaschit divided into four. You said that one of the parts attained liberation and another part merged in the moon. This amounts to saying that the same individual could be partly liberated with a part remaining in bondage. Can this happen?

[**Note:** Neither this question nor the response of Sage Vasishta were present in the original text of Yogavaasishta. It is introduced by the Commentator, Shri ABS, who elaborately discussed it from various nuances. Because the subject matter is very well developed by him, we shall include here a gist of the arguments presented.]

Vasishta: Rama, take a Bengal gram plant. A plant is like an individual. The plant eventually reaches fruition in its season. After it bears the pods, there is an individual in each of the seeds. Some of the seeds fall down to the ground. A shoot comes out of each of the seeds. Each of these shoots will be separate plants and hence separate individuals. Each of the plants will have its own story.

Say a person plucked out a fistful of the seeds from the plants and ate them. Now the fistful of seeds merged with the man and became one with him. This is what we see all the time. It is not possible for the single individual tree to become so many different individuals if we accept your contention. Even if somehow the individual multiplies, it would still be out of question, as per your theory, for some to germinate and grow and for others to be chewed up and merged with other creatures. But it happens all the time in the world. It is so because Pure Consciousness alone exists. There is no other. A separate individual arises when it is reflected in a mind. If that mind divides into two or more, there will be two or more individuals. If by chance the divided minds unite, the separate individuals amalgamate into one. All your doubts will vanish once you clearly understand this truth.

Rama: My doubt is cleared. Let us proceed with the story.

Vasishta: The southern King Vipaschit reached the Shalmali Islands and established a new kingdom. He eliminated his enemies and is ruling there even today. He is not enlightened yet.

A crocodile swallowed the northern King Vipaschit during a sea voyage. But he did not die. He lived like a worm in the croc'c stomach for a thousand years. He lived eating the flesh in the stomach. When the crocodile died, he came out through its mouth. He swam in the sweet ocean waters for a long time and finally found a golden land. This land was on the route to the world of gods. As he traveled by that route, he was changed to a god. Though he became a god, he resumed his travels because of his past impressions. Ultimately he reached the Lokaaloka Mountain Range. Only one side of the Lokaaloka Mountain range receives illumination. The other side is in permanent darkness. Only the illuminated side is inhabited by various creatures. No thing exists on the dark side.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 126.]

44. Astronomical Information

Rama: Gurudev, how is the sphere of earth held in space without any prop? How are the stars able to move without any support? How did the Lokaaloka Mountain Range get its name ?

[**Note:** This question on the scientific knowledgebase of the times has arisen as a part of the discourse. Sage Valmiki adopted the style of the authors of that period in providing the information on the subject at two levels — the philosophical and the astronomical.

Sage Vasishta's response to Rama's query from entire creation is said to be taking place depending on the past innate tendencies of the first Individual, the two viewpoints are as given below:

Philosophical Perspective:

The entire creation is taking shape because of the thoughts arising out of the innate tendencies present in the first Individual, Hiranyagarbha. It is like a dream and has utterly no reality to it. A dreamer may see any sights in his dream depending on his past impressions. No logical conditions can be laid on what appears in a dream. Thus sage Vasishta once again establishes the unreality of the world.

Astronomical Perspective:

Sage Vasishta gave the astronomical details in two Sargas comprising a total of about 50 verses. He discussed the creation of the universe, star constellations, spatial directions and arrangement of the hemispheres of the universe beyond galactic spaces. He said that space exists beyond the hemispheres also.

Commentator, Shri ABS, gave much more detailed information. Readers interested in Astronomy may like to read the two Sargas and the commentary of Shri

ABS for more information.

Here ends the Sarga 127.]

Rama: Sir, how did you know so much astronomical information?

Vasishta: Rama!

अस्मदादेर्जनस्यैतत्प्रत्यक्षं नानुमानिकम् ।
शुद्धबोधशरीरेण नाधिभौतिकरूपिणा ।।

asmadāderjanasyaitatpratyakṣaṃ nānumānikam |
śuddhabodhaśarīreṇa nādhibhautikarūpiṇā ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 128, Sloka 1

(Meaning: Yogis like us have direct knowledge of these things. These are not our conjectures. Such direct knowledge cannot be obtained with the physical body. It is possible only using the subtle body).

Not only this universe, the layer of water that occurs after the celestial hemispheres, then the layer of fire, after which is the layer of wind, followed by the layer of space are also directly experienced by us. The layer of space exists in a state which is neither light nor darkness.

We were narrating the story of the northern King Vipaschit before we diverged to this topic. Let us go back to that story.

45. The Birth of The Deer

The northern Vipaschit climbed up the Lokaaloka Mountain and had an accident. He fell from the illuminated side of the Mountain into a depression on the dark side. His body remained on the peak of the Mountain. But he fell into the gorge. He looked up during the fall to find that eagles were devouring his body. He wondered how he existed without the body. He could deduce that his gross body dropped off and he was continuing with his subtle body. Because he still was possessed of the mental body, he did not attain Self-realization.

Rama: Teacher, how can the mind be present in the absence of support from the gross body ? How can it move? This King could move with divine body along the celestial paths without any problem. Even after that body was dropped, he was able to travel in space. If both the bodies have the same quality of movement in space, what is the difference between the divine body and the subtle body ?

Vasishta: Why to question King Vipaschit ? Suppose, a king right here on the earth

was physically sitting in his court. But he reached his harem in his imagination mentally. Just because his mind was in the harem, it does not mean that his gross body would have moved. Therefore, travel by the mental body has no relation to the gross body. The same thing happens when you fantasize, when you dream or imagine things. It is also the same thing when you listen to a story or when you misapprehend a thing. It is a common experience for all.

You get dreams or you fantasize things when you leave the physical body and take up another body. That other body is called "*ātivāhikā* body." After a time, you forget the feeling of ownership towards the *ātivāhikā* body. That forgetfulness leads you back to the claim of ownership of the physical body. We then call it the wakeful state. If a man, in contrast, is able to understand that the physical body is imaginary while still being within it, he will forget the gross body and will be in *ātivāhikā* body. If he continues with the search for truth, he will forget the *ātivāhikā* body also. What would then remain would be Pure Consciousness.

The northern King Vipaschit could not forget the *ātivāhikā* body. On the top of it, he thought that "he was the *ātivāhikā* body." Hence he did not achieve Self-realization. Consequently, he could notice his mind even though he moved ahead. He witnessed deep darkness as he fell further like an individual who was about to take birth would see his prospective mother's womb. He saw an earth when he was roaming around in that darkness. The surface of the land was shimmering with a golden glow extending to millions of miles. He passed that also. He noticed a layer of water. After that were the layers of fire, wind and space. After crossing all these, he reached the Consciousness-space admixed with ignorance.

The Consciousness-space admixed with ignorance is the one from which everything arises. It is no- thing and also every- thing!

The king wandered there and found another earth, water, fire, wind and space as well as many other worlds. He saw several more worlds on his way. Even today he is alive exploring and discovering newer and newer places.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 128.]

To sum it all up, Rama, the eastern king reached the moon. The kings of the north and south are still going through the cycles of births and deaths. The western king attained liberation. The eastern king continued with his worship of the moon. But in the midst of his worship he became friends with a base deer. As a result, he was born as a deer. Thus ends the story of the four King Vipaschit-s.

Rama: Teacher, you said that the north and the south kings were moving around various universes. Can you please see them with your divine vision and tell us in which universe they are now living?

Vasishta: Sorry, Rama! I cannot tell you. The series of worlds that exist in this creation are innumerable. Some of them are beyond my clairvoyant vision. The kings may be wandering in some worlds somewhere. So I do not know the details.

Rama: Please tell us at least where the eastern king who was born as a deer is.

Vasishta: The deer lives in the same world as ours.

Rama: You said that all the kings crossed our worlds and reached some place in the universe. How come this king is back again in our world?

Vasishta: It is the ignorant people who talk of distances between different universes. From the viewpoint of the Knowers of Truth, everything is Infinite Consciousness. The Infinite Consciousness is unidimensional. Therefore, there is no question of far or near within it. The concept of distance comes to the minds of the persons in ignorance because of their innate tendencies. Interconnections between different worlds would also be available to people depending on their past impressions. The eastern King returned to our world through such paths.

Rama: Where is he now in this world?

Vasishta: Rama! The King of Trigarta sent to you recently a gift of a fawn (the young one of a deer). That fawn is the eastern King Vipaschit !

[**Note:** Sri Rama was surprised at this piece of information. He ordered his aides to get the fawn into the court immediately. The fawn was like any other young deer with quick moving eyes and happy prancing feet. It was unbelievable to think that that was the eastern King Vipaschit. Rama recovered himself from the surprise and asked a question.

Note: Here ends the Sarga 129.]

46. Rebirth of King Vipaschit

Rama: Revered Teacher! Is it possible for the king to get back his human form ending the life of an animal ?

Vasishta: Rama! It is good for human beings to stick to the God whom they worship as their principal deity. They can get rid of their difficulties by praying to God. It is better not to keep shifting their gods each time. The scriptures also say:

यः स्वां देवता मतियजति प्र्स्वायै देवतायै च्यवते न परम् प्राप्नोति पापीयान् भवति

yaḥ svāṃ devatā matiyajati prsvāyai devatāyai cyavate
na param prāpnoti pāpīyān bhavati

Taittariya Samhita 2-5-4-4

(Meaning: Whoever drops the God of his regular worship and forsakes his personal God in order to worship other Gods, he would not obtain the supreme position. Instead, he will be a sinner).

Hence it is advisable that the King should worship again the God of Fire to attain the higher position. Let us help him a bit with this. Please watch what happens now!

[**Note:** Speaking thus, Sage Vasishta took into his palm a little of the sacred waters from his pot (*kamandala*). He uttered a few prayers. Suddenly there were rising flames in the midst of the court hall without any fuel wood supporting the fire.

The flames were free of smoke and pollutants. The audience in the court was nonplussed. Unable to bear the heat from the flames, they began to move away. But the young deer was quite fascinated by the fire and kept looking at it.

Sage Vasishta opened his eyes, sanctified the animal with his looks and prayed to the God of Fire as follows:

Vasishta: Oh, God of Fire! Please recall the worship done by this individual in his past life and show mercy to him. Kindly free him from the present form of the deer and grant him his earlier human form as Vipaschit.

As the Sage was thus praying, the fawn came running like an arrow and jumped into the fire. The animal was almost burnt down to ashes. But slowly it was transformed into the strong body of a king. As more and more the shape of the body firmed up, the flames in the fire diminished. Sage Vasishta recognized him to be the eastern King Vipaschit. But the audience in the court was left saucer-eyed at the splendor and brilliance of the King. They called him, "The Bright One, The Bright One."

The King Vipaschit seated himself on the floor right there and meditated. He recalled his past story. Immediately he approached Sage Vasishta and bowed to him. He called the Sage as the Bestower of Self-Knowledge. The Sage affectionately patted him in response and blessed him thus:

"Oh King! May the ignorance, the end of which you had been efforting to see for a long time, be erased now!"

The King then started to proceed towards Rama hailing victory for him. Noticing it, King Dasarath (Rama's father) got up and welcomed King Vipaschit. He offered him a seat requesting him to relax because he could be considerably tired from his long travels. King Vipaschit saluted Sage Viswamitra and others and took his seat with dignity.

Here ends the Sarga 130.]

King Dasarath: How scary is ignorance? King Vipaschit had to undergo so much struggle just to find the boundaries of space. I wonder why he was stung by such a desire at all.

Viswamitra: (intervening in the discussions): Oh Great King Dasarath! Suffering is

inescapable for anybody pursuing an investigation of ignorance.

Once upon a time there was a country by name *vatadhāna* (means the particles in the seeds of a fig tree). There were three princes in that country. They were single minded in their intent to find the endpoint of this creation. Even to date they are going round and round the creation in circles like an ant on a ball. They could not find the last point. One can find the last point if something like that does really exist ! Creation is just a phantasm of Hiranyagarbha. It is a figment of his imagination. As long as an individual (*jīva*) thinks that 'he is not Pure Consciousness but only a contraction', the specter keeps ballooning.

(Addressing King Vipaschit now): Oh King Vipaschit! You also thought likewise and explored a lot. Do you remember the worlds you had seen? Will you tell us about them?

King Vipaschit: Learned Sage! Yes, I wandered around quite a large number of worlds. I had seen numerous things. With the blessings of the Fire God, I could witness with a determined mind several things through many births. I experienced a new world in each of my lives. By the grace of the Fire God, I remember them all.

[**Note:** With the above statement as an introduction, King Vipaschit narrated some of the noteworthy experiences he had had and also talked about the wide variety of the births he went through – as animals, birds, trees, human beings, gods, and demons. This narration is in Sargas 131 and 132. We had many examples of such stories so far. Without spending time on this, we shall proceed to the concluding part of the story.]

King Vipaschit:

नेदं नेदं सदित्येव विचारानुभवे स्थितम् ।
तथापीदमिदं चेति दुर्दृष्टिर्न निवर्तते ।।

nedaṃ nedaṃ sadityeva vicārānubhave sthitam |
tathāpīdamidaṃ ceti durdṛṣṭirna nivartate ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 132, Sloka 17

Every time I looked at the world I felt, "It cannot be True, it cannot be True". Deeper inquiry confirmed this hunch of mine again and again. But the illusory outlook, "This is separate, that is separate" never receded.

Whenever I experienced pleasure or pain, it always seemed to be a new experience. Let me give you an example of a very strange experience I had.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 132.

The Brahmavaivarta Purana contains a story on how the earth has also come to be known as "Medini." According to the story therein, the skulls of the demons Madhu and Kaitabh exploded when Lord Vishnu killed them. The fat (*medas* in Sanskrit) from the brains of the demons spread as a layer on the entire earth. Since then, the earth acquired the name Medini. This story comes from another similar story in the Vedas. Sage Valmiki combines both these two stories and narrates it here through the words of King Vipaschit as "The Story of the Corpse". The thrust of the story is to establish once again the unreality of the visible world.]

47. The Story of the Corpse

King Vipaschit: Maharishi Vasishta! There is a very harsh and hostile earth in this world. It is not accessible even to esteemed people like you. I could visit that earth thanks to the courtesy and grace of the Fire God. While I was roaming around there, I found a huge shadow at one place. I looked up in curiosity. I found at a considerable distance in the sky an enormous body resembling a human being. That form was neither stable nor steady. It was spinning fast and heading for a speedy crash down. I surmised that I would be crushed underneath that falling body if I stayed there. I looked for an escape and found burning flames nearby. I have been a worshipper of Fire through several births of mine. I felt it would be safer to jump into the fire rather than be flattened under that huge form. So I leapt into the fire.

The God of Fire is very compassionate towards me. He remembered my worship. He cajoled me affectionately. He suggested going to his world. He took me aboard his vehicle Parrot and took off high into the sky. We came nearer and nearer to the enormously huge human-like form as we flew higher and higher. I noticed that it was a dead body. I was shaking with fear that we might collide head on with it. The God of Fire did not entertain any fear. As he neared the corpse, he intensified the flames, burnt a hole in the corpse and flew right through the hole. We crossed the dead body and reached the other side. I calmed down and looked below inquisitively.

The colossal body hit the earth with a heavy force. There was an explosive sound as if the earth was shattered. The dead body was far larger than the earth. Throngs of gods rushed to the earth from all directions on hearing the sound. It was quite noisy everywhere. I enquired from the Fire God in wonder wherefrom such a huge body came and why it fell down on the earth. The Fire God asked me with a smile to keep watching. He added that he would tell me the entire story later on.

I looked down. The earth was not visible any longer. I could see only the tummy part of the colossal corpse. I was not able to decipher how far away the head, limbs and other parts of the body extended. When I asked the Fire God about it, He said that they fell on the Lokaaloka Mountain and would be invisible to humans. But by His grace I could see those parts from that moment on.

In the meanwhile, some of the groups of gods reached the dead body. They encircled it and were dancing. They invoked the Goddess *Kālarātri* . The Goddess manifested there. Her devotees made an offering of the corpse to her and requested her to consume it.

[**Note:** An allusion was made to the Goddess *Kālarātri* in the 81st Sarga also. The description there is not as detailed as here.]

Maharishi! The Goddess who was also the life-force began to drink the blood from the corpse. The Goddess got bloated as she drank more and more blood. Her cohorts began chewing the various organs of the dead body. A few other groups of gods gathered on parts of the Lokaaloka Mountain Range where the limbs of the corpse did not extend up to and observed the scene with frightened looks.

The colorful earth flourishing with all the natural wealth of forests, rivers, oceans and mountains thus far was covered completely by the blood and flesh of the corpse. It was impossible to see any land surface. Slowly the form of the earth reappeared as the followers of *Kālarātri* devoured the dead body. The earth appeared to have been draped in a cloth made up of the brain fat (*medas*). The bones from the dead body piled up like new mountains.

I posed once again my query to the God of Fire regarding the source of the corpse. He was kind to tell me the story as follows:

God of Fire: Oh King Vipaschit! Just as you may notice yourself as a traveler in your dream, Pure Consciousness-Self witnesses Itself as fire. The Supreme Consciousness in its subatomic size as a spark desired to expand owing to the ignorance covering It. Just as your own thoughts create a big city in your dream, the thoughts of the Supreme Consciousness Brahman became the world. A huge demon of the size of a mountain lived in one corner of that world and a Sage lived in another corner.

One day the demon gate crashed arrogantly into the hermitage of the sage. The cottage of the sage was crushed under the colossal body of the demon. The sage could somehow save himself by the skin of his teeth. He was very furious and cursed the demon to die and be reborn as a mosquito because the demon was responsible for the destruction. Soon the atoms from the body of the demon merged into the five fundamental elements. The consciousness inside the atoms thought that "I am a mosquito." Immediately the demon got transformed into a tiny body of a mosquito.

48. Birth without a mother

Rama: Revered Teacher! King Vipaschit said at the opening of his story that the entire world was a dream. You too said so many times. We do not find a womb for the bodies in a dream; but the bodies in the wakeful world come out of a mother's womb. They have an ancestry. The mosquito that the King was speaking about did not seem to have a mother. Does it mean that some bodies in the wakeful world are born without a mother?

Vasishta: Every living creature from the four faced Brahma to a tiny insect have two types of birth: one is through the Mentations of Brahman; the other is through illusion.

पूर्वरूढजगद्भ्रान्तिभूततन्मात्ररञ्जनात् ।
भूतानां संभवः प्रोक्तो भ्रान्तिजो दृश्यसङ्गतः ।।

pūrvarūḍhajagadbhrāntibhūtatanmātrarañjanāt |
bhūtānāṃ saṃbhavaḥ prokto bhrāntijo dṛśyasaṅgataḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 136, Sloka 23

(Meaning: The firmly embedded series of fantasies from the past lives help in establishing an identity with the fundamental five proto-elements (tanmatras). If a creature is born as a result of such an identification, it is called the birth through illusion. Perceptual contact has a strong role in this process).

अभातायां जगद्भ्रान्तौ भूतभावः स्वयं भवन् ।
यः स ब्रह्ममयः प्रोक्तः संभवो न स योनिजः ।।

abhātāyāṃ jagadbhrāntau bhūtabhāvaḥ svayaṃ bhavan |
yaḥ sa brahmamayaḥ proktaḥ saṃbhavo na sa yonijaḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 136, Sloka 24

(Meaning: The Supreme Brahman at a stage when It does not have any imagination of the world or in other words prior to the creation, goes through a changeless change to become the five elements by the strength of Its own thought. This type of birth comprising the five elements is through the Mentation of Brahman. This does not require a mother's womb).

These are the only two types of births you come across in the world. If a birth takes place because of some past imagination, it is a birth out of a womb, though you may not have clearly seen the womb. From this angle, the birth in a dream and the wakeful world has no difference between them. Both are illusory and hence both are births from a womb.

You may talk of a lineage for the birth in the wakeful world. If you regress in the series, you may go up to the four faced Brahma. What lineage is present beyond? Who is the mother for Brahma? His first creation has to be purely mental but not dependent on sex. Would you say that Sanak, Sananda and others born from such mental conceptualization belong to the wakeful world or dream creation? Can we call them dream creatures simply because they have no mother? Hence lineage is not an important criterion to classify birth in the wakeful world. Sometimes you may notice a lineage in a dream too. Can we call it then to be a birth in the wakeful world? So let us leave the mosquito's lineage for the present and get on with the main story. I shall now tell you the story of Vipaschit myself.

The life span of a mosquito is just a few days. However great one might have been in his previous life, the life span of a mosquito cannot increase. The mosquito that was the re-born demon lived happily amidst puddles and bushes for some days. Finally one day, a deer stamped on the mosquito. The mosquito shivered with fear looking at the hoof of the animal falling on it like a huge mountain. It tried to escape but the time was too short. The mosquito was trampled to death.

Because the mosquito was observing the deer with one-pointed attention out of fear at the time of its death, it was born as a deer in its next life. It moved around a forest without any worry for some time. One day a hunter shot it with an arrow. Because it was focused in its thoughts about the hunter at the time of its death, it was reborn as a hunter.

The hamlet where the hunter lived was located near a hermitage of a saint. The hunter became friends with one of the ascetics in the hermitage. The sage taught him detachment, non-violence etc. whenever possible. Eventually the hunter took the teachings to his heart. He began a process of introspection. Finally the hunter approached the sage and requested him to teach him a way of life that would be free from misery because violence was said to be the chief cause for sorrow.

The ascetic was quite delighted. He taught the hunter self restraint, control of senses, discipline and the means to Self-inquiry. Further he advised the hunter to throw away the bow and arrows and asked him to live in the hermitage. He ordained him to consume whatever food he obtained effortlessly and to associate himself with noble people.

49. Are Dreams External or Internal ?

The hunter faithfully adopted the recommended lifestyle. Gradually, his discretion improved. Several new questions arose in him. Unable to resolve them by himself, he approached the sage again. He placed his doubts before him.

Hunter:

भगवन्दृश्यते स्वप्नः कथमन्तर्बहिः स्थितः ।।

bhagavandṛśyate svapnaḥ kathamantarbahiḥ sthitaḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 137, Sloka 5

My Lord, how do we notice this external and internal dream world ?

[**Note:** The Sanskrit wording in the above verse in the original text is a bit confusing. It can be interpreted in many different ways. Commentator Shri ABS observed, based on the forthcoming answer in the text, that the above sentence essentially amalgamated five questions.

The five questions made explicit by Shri ABS were:

1. Why do the individuals see the dream within their minds as an external world?
2. How are the individuals able to perceive the dream (in the absence of sense organs to the dream body)?
3. How does the external world become a dream to be witnessed inside (the mind)?
4. If the world is present both internally and externally, why should one of them appear as a dream?
5. If the entire visible world is a dream, why should a part look to be internal and a part to be external?

We shall now examine how Sage Vasishta answered these questions.]

Vasishta: Rama, the Ascetic was very pleased with the questions posed by the hunter. He gave a detailed response to each question on the following lines:

The Ascetic: My Boy! I too had similar doubts when I was young and lacked discrimination. I practiced Yoga and knew body-swapping techniques. I wanted to experientially understand by myself the answers to these questions using the yogic techniques.

So I took up the lotus posture and began the yoga process of body-swapping. I anchored myself securely within my Consciousness-Self and pushed my mind away from me. Then I pulled it back towards me. I practiced this pull and push of the mind and also of the life-force. Thus I gained control over them. Later I joined them with the life-force of my disciple. His and my life-forces together entered his heart. Along with my life-force my mind and along with my mind the individual (*jīva*) in me too entered the body of my disciple.

Though I entered his body with great enthusiasm, I was not very comfortable there. I entered his heart sac first. Then I drifted along the blood vessels in his heart. Everything was very chaotic inside. I saw on all sides thousands of nerves, nutrient channels, bones, muscles etc. The fire of digestion kept the body warm. The cool air from outside became hot after entering through the nostrils and was converted into life-principle.

I adjusted myself to the hubbub and went to his root-fire through the digestive fire. Root fire is the elemental fire which is one of the five elements that constitute the gross and subtle bodies. I could see from there the same world as he was seeing. It appeared to me as if I was witnessing a dream. I was not sleeping then. I did not understand how I could watch a dream when I was not sleeping. I could understand it in the following way.

Pure Consciousness is the only fundamental thing that exists. This is the root elemental material. It acquires the name of Ishwar when It is admixed with the beginningless innate tendencies. Ishwar changes Himself by Himself into space. He functions by dividing the space into various parts as earth, water, fire, wind (air), individual (*(jīva*) and the world (*jagat*). Ishwar, however, does not lose His real form while witnessing the empty space in the form of elements and gross substances.

Suppose a person does not leave his real form and notices a multiplicity of objects within himself. People describe it as a dream. The next question is whether the dreams we notice are a part of our world or not. There is no reason to deny that they are part of our world. Hence we have to admit that one part is our world and another part is the dream within the effulgence of the Consciousness. It is evident from this that our dream world and awake world are no different.

Further, a dream world is as good as a wakeful world from the perspective of the dream state. From the position of the dream, the wakeful world is a dream. All of this is within our experience. For example, say a beggar dreamt that he was an emperor. His awake world of activity during his dream was his dream empire. At that time the hollow of the tree where he lives and his begging bowl in his actual awake state are no more than a dream for him. It is his own experience which may not correspond to that of others. If each person looks at it from his/her own perspective, he/she will not find any basic difference between the awake state and dream state.

But death is neither an awake state nor a dream state. What is the condition of the individual at the time of his death? If we deeply examine this question, we find that there is really no death at all! It is so because the individual is none other than Consciousness-Self. Thousands of bodies may come and go; but the individual has no death. If we accept death as a fact, we will have to answer the questions like: When did he die? How did he die? For whom is he dead ? There are no real answers to any of these questions. Hence we have to agree that death is not a fact.

We raised the issue of death here because we presumed that the body was separate from the individual (*(jīva*). The truth of the matter is that the Pure Consciousness takes the form of a body sometimes and as a formless individual at other times. If the fundamental thing present and existing is only one but 'appears to be different things' at different times, such appearances have to be illusory.

I could understand that Consciousness by Its very nature was formless and It might show up with a form or without a form. I also understood that the indefinable subatomic particles like Consciousness appear as the body as well as the world due to our illusory perception.

We have the answers to the first two questions of yours in my experiential findings narrated above. You also queried why the dreams appear to happen outside our body and how we are able to witness the dream in the absence of sensory organs. As per my understanding, these things happen because they are illusory appearances.

We shall now come to your third question. You asked me how the external world could appear as a dream inside you.

निवृत्तो बाह्यतो जीवो जीवाधारे हृदि स्थितः ।
रूपं स्वं स्वप्नसर्गोऽयमिति वेत्ति चिदाकचान् ।।

nivṛtto bāhyato jīvo jīvādhāre hṛdi sthitaḥ |
rūpaṃ svaṃ svapnasargo'yamiti vetti cidākacān ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 137, Sloka 43

Let us take the wakeful state. The karma (effect of past actions) is the cause for the experiencing of happiness or sorrow in the awake state in the now.

Karma becomes quiescent periodically so that the sensory and other systems may rest for a while. The individual tries to relax at such times in the heart which is the source of life. But he does not rest fully. He begins to witness some changeless change in Consciousness. The changeless change produces different forms of himself. Based on the type of experiences he had during the wakeful state, he considers these to be external to him. He calls the stream of such forms as a dream.

Let me say it again. Whether it is a wakeful state or dream state, what is is only one thing. It is a reflection of the Consciousness, a form of Itself. If the mind of the individual extends outward and witnesses its reflection, he calls it a wakeful state. When the same individual looks at the same reflection when he is in his heart space, he calls it a dream. It is not therefore that there are two different worlds – one outside and another inside. It is in the way you look that makes all the difference between the wakeful and dream worlds.

Your next question was how was it that we notice one part as wakeful and another part as the dream world if it is one and the same world inside as well as outside. Your last question was why we feel a difference as internal and external if it is all one continuous dream experience. In other words you question why we get a feeling of a world appearing inside or outside, whether it is real or imaginary.

In fact we already answered the question. We have noticed that these differences come about depending on the way the mind of the individual sees the things. This is the irrefutable truth. Those who understand it are able to progress on the path of Knowledge and obtain Nirvana finally.

50. Deep Sleep State and Turiya

The Ascetic (Continuing): My Boy, you did really inquire quite thoroughly into the wakeful and dream states. There are two more – one is the state of deep sleep and the other is Turiya. I investigated these also during my meditation. I shall now tell you about them.

The individual (*jīva*) perceives the perceivables (objects) during the dream and wakeful states and experiences the resultant happiness and misery. Sometimes he does not like to be bothered by these and gets an idea to desert the mind so that he can be peaceful. But this feeling does not stay too long. So long as he continues to feel that way, he remains in the deep sleep state (*suśupti*). After that he goes into either the dream state or the wakeful state. The individual may sometimes get into a deep sleep like mode while he is awake. He will be free of any thoughts in this state. Such states comprise the deep meditative positions.

These states are akin to the nails and hair in our body. Do we take the nails, hair etc. to be living or non-living? Are they conscious or inert ? Are we always aware of them or not ? These questions lack a definitive answer. All the above qualities apply to the various states to some extent or other. But no quality is applicable fully. It is the same case with respect to *suśupti* and meditative states also.

Next I proceeded to examine Turiya during my meditation. I understood that Turiya is True Knowledge. There is a peculiarity embedded in this perfect Knowledge.

यथास्थितमिदं विश्वं सम्यग्बोधाद्विलीयते ।
यथास्थितं च भवति न च किंचिद्विलीयते ।।

yathāsthitamidaṃ viśvaṃ samyagbodhādvilīyate |
yathāsthitaṃ ca bhavati na ca kiṃcidvilīyate ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 137, Sloka 58

(Meaning: The entire visible world melts away (i.e. the world disappears) in perfect Knowledge. But at the same time, it does not go anywhere; it stays as it is!).

We do not have an appropriate metaphor to illustrate this. We may adopt light and darkness as an approximate example. When there is light, darkness goes away completely. If light goes away, darkness returns. Where did darkness go away to and from where has it returned? We may postulate that darkness retreated to a corner where there is no light and it has returned from there. The existence of such a corner could be valid with respect to the usual darkness and light. As far as the Illumination of Pure Consciousness is concerned, there is no place where the Illumination does not exist. Hence we have to say that in the case of Pure Consciousness-Knowledge, the darkness-like world stays as it is where it is.

सयथास्थितमस्तीदं नूनं नास्ति च किंचन

sayathāsthitamastīdaṃ nūnaṃ nāsti ca kiṃcana

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 137, Sloka 59

For one who attained Turiya, the wakeful, dream and deep sleep states continue to appear as they are; but he has the awareness that they are non-existent.

Water is another example. If water condenses, we call it ice. If it is a liquid, we call it water. If it is in gaseous state, we call it steam. Can we say that the solidity, liquidity and gaseousness are hidden inside the water? The answer is both yes and no. In the same way, we can say that the world composed of the wakeful, dream and deep sleep states can be taken to be present or not present within the Infinite Knowledge of Pure Consciousness! That was my understanding.

Dear Hunter, having thus understood the three states of awake, dream and deep sleep through the technique of body-swapping, I decided to take my research further.

51. Do We All Share the same World ?

During my earlier investigation, I entered the body of my disciple in the form of elemental fire. Next I wanted to explore assuming a form subtler than fire and observe in-depth how my disciple experiences objects. But my sense organs rebelled and spread outwards before I could change into a subtler form. Having noticed this, I had to control my sense organs and shove them by force towards the individual just like you push down using pressure an oil drop floating on the water. The past impressions of mine and those of my disciple got intermixed in the process. As a result I began to see two different worlds at the same time.

Generally people living in one place think that they are all witnessing the same world. But that is simply not the truth. Each person witnesses a world of his own as per his perspective. I arrived at this interesting conclusion that each man lives in his own world based on my own experience and observation. The earth appeared to me in two forms. So also the sun, the four quarters, and the whole world appeared to have doubled with two forms of each object. It was also not possible to say that there were two distinctly separate worlds. They were totally mixed up but doubled in size.

I was confused a lot by these developments. I composed myself eventually and merged completely my individuality with that of my disciple. Our two individualities amalgamated and flowed like two rivers in confluence. I felt that our past impressions and constraining adjuncts dissolved into one another. Then the doubled up world began to appear as one world. I managed at this stage to reduce my thoughts and merge them with those of my disciple without losing my own discrimination. I started to observe the external world through his mind. As I did not forego my own discretion, I was like an indifferent spectator.

My student continued with his activities of eating, drinking, moving, sleeping etc. When he felt sleepy, his life-force gave a strong tug to his vagrant mind. His sensory perturbations too were drawn into his heart sac by the force of this pull. The perturbations attenuated in the heart sac. The sensory activity became completely silent and the condition of the sensory organs was almost like death.

Because our individualities (my individuality and that of my disciple), our minds and senses had been merged, I too traveled with them inside his body and reached his heart sac.

The *samāna* wind near his navel oscillated in the blood vessels there. It was not able to go outside because it was obstructed by nutrients. The life-force in him entered the subtle nerve '*puritat*' within the heart, took full control of the mind and dissolved it. The mind being absent, Consciousness-Self alone was left behind. I experienced an indefinable happy rest in that position. This is the *suśupti* (deep sleep) state. Sorrow doesn't touch this state.

52. The Pecking Order Of Life-Force and The Mind

Rama: I have a question here, Teacher. You mentioned that life-force had dissolved the mind and hence the mind was non-functional. Does that mean that the mind is controlled by the life-force in its activity? Does not the mind function independently?

Vasishta: Rama, you are already aware that the fundamental substrate for body, life-force, mind, world etc. is Pure Consciousness. If we take away the substrate rope, can the snake have any beingness of its own? Similarly, if we separate the mind and life-force from the Consciousness-Self, both the mind and the life-force lose beingness. When they are together, the beingness of the substrate Consciousness-Self extends to both of them. When the life-force withdraws, it goes along with the substratum, Pure Consciousness. The mind lacks an independent beingness even when it is associated with the life-force. How can the mind have any beingness or form when it gets separated from the life-force ?

From the perspective of the Knowers of Brahman, everything in the world including the mind is Brahman. The basic form of mind is Brahman.

Ordinary people are unable to see Brahman, though Brahman is right in front of their eyes. In order to understand clearly why ordinary people miss Brahman, I shall explain to you the way they 'superimpose' various layers on Brahman during their perception.

Prior to creation there was nothing but Consciousness-Self. It projects a mind on itself. The mind projects a movement on itself. This movement is the life-force. The mind also imagines space and time within it. With the help of these it projects the entire world within itself. From then on, the world and its processes manifest. What I said is not a fancy imagination of mine.

प्राणीकृतः स्वयमयं ननु चेतसात्मा देहीकृतस्त्रिभुवनीकृत एव नाद्यः ।
देहीकृतः खवपुरेव गिरीकृतश्च स्वप्नेषु कल्पितपुरीष्वनुभूतमेतत् ।।

prāṇīkṛtaḥ svayamayaṃ nanu cetasātmā dehīkṛtastribhuvanīkṛta eva nādyaḥ |
dehīkṛtaḥ khavapureva girīkṛtaśca svapneṣu kalpitapurīṣvanubhūtametat ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 138, Sloka 37

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki introduced a variation in the word "naadyah" in the above verse. It has to be divided as *naa* + *aadyah*. It means the Primary Individual.]

Who is the Primary Individual behind your dream? It is you! You have become another living being in your dream. How could you do that? Your mind changed you as another living creature in your dream. You were the life-force and you were also the body of that dream creature. You were also the ambient world around that creature. So whoever got changed to a different body in the dream was also changed to become the other dream objects like the hills, rivers, trees, animals, cities, people and so on.

You are quite familiar with the process of creating all sorts of things in a dream. This is in your daily experience. I described the same process in a systematic manner as the Process of Superimposition. So it was not my invention.

Thus you can see Rama, that the entire world is a figment of imagination by the mind. The mind is a projection of the Supreme Brahman. Hence it is not possible for the mind to have an independent and separate beingness divorced from Brahman. You have also asked me whether the activity of the mind (thinking ability) is under the control of the life-force. The mind is mostly under the control of the life-force. The mind is the one which comes first during the process of superimposition. Mind projects life-force which then bosses over the mind. During the wakeful and dream states mind and life-force compete with each other but work on equal footing. The mind weakens and life-force becomes dominant in the *suśupti* state.

Rama: Why is the mind subdued during deep sleep whereas it was able to compete on equal terms during wakeful and dream states?

Vasishta: No, it is not that the mind is subordinated. In fact it is the mind that originates life-force. Hence mind is always primary. But it is too tired by the time of the *suśupti* state. Therefore, it concedes temporary primacy to life-force so that it (the mind) can get some rest. As a matter of fact the life-force too will be tired by that time and hence the organs under its control will not be very active. Consequently, only the principal component of the life-force will be working during *suśupti*

चित्तमेव जगत्कर्तृ संकल्पयति यद्यथा ।
असत्सत्सदसच्चैव तत्तथा तस्य तिष्ठति ।।

cittameva jagatkartṛ saṃkalpayati yadyathā |
asatsatsadasaccaiva tattathā tasya tiṣṭhati ||
Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 139, Sloka 1

Rama, mind is the author of the entire world. Whatever it conceives happens. If it thinks a thing to be real, it is real. If it takes a thing to be unreal, it would be unreal. If it thinks it is real-unreal, it will be real-unreal. 'Real' here applies to what is empirical like the world. "Unreal' refers to the dream-like state of the dream world. 'Real-Unreal' means illusory like the silver in nacre.

The mind can create whatever it imagines. It thinks that it cannot exist without life-force. From then on it surrenders itself to the control of the life-force.

Rama: The life-force of a dreamer does not enter his dream world. That means the mind is alone conducting the affairs there. Likewise, we also find only the mind active in daydreaming of building castles in the air. These instances contradict your contention that the mind cannot exist without the life-force.

Vasishta: How are we to assume that life-force does not exist in the dream world or during daydreaming? How did the life-force of the wakeful world originate? Was it not the imagination of the mind? Whenever the mind creates a body, be it during dreaming or daydreaming, it necessarily originates life-force also. Therefore, we cannot presume that life-force does not exist in the dream world or during daydreaming.

The obvious fact is that whether it is the wakeful state or dream world or daydreaming, any entity created by the mind is bound by the mind, the life-force and the body. In other words, the creature firmly believes, “I am the mind”; “I am the life-force”; “I am the body”. That is the reason why every one’s mind loves so much one’s own life and body. If the body is hurt, the mind thinks that its life-force is also hurt. Therefore, his organs dependent on the life-force react to the hurt. If the mind has to acquire worldly knowledge or learn Self-Knowledge, both mind and life-force have to work together. The duo mutually reinforce each another. Mind is the driver for the car called life-force and life-force is the driver for the car called mind. They move forward pushing each other.

Rama: Why should it work the same way in all individuals?

Vasishta: Hiranyagarbha conceived that way at the beginning of the creation. The same rule works as long as the present creation lasts. It is called the irrevocable Law of Nature or The Natural Principle.

Rama: Do the mind - life-force pair always move with equal primacy?

Vasishta: No, no. If the mind and life-force work in equal vigor, it would be the wakeful state. If the activity of life-force is diminished and the mind is more active, it is the dream state. If both mind and life-force are diminished in activity, it is the deep sleep state.

Sometimes the nutrients or other secretions may inhibit the smooth flow of life-force. Then the life-force gets pushed to a corner and is compacted. The compacted life-force would almost be inert. It would be unable to provide any support to the mind in that state. The mind will then be stifled. This condition may lead the individual to deep sleep. It can happen with a totally full or completely empty stomach.

Rama: Very well, Teacher! The ascetic had been revealing to the hunter his yogic experiences. He covered the story till the deep sleep state when we digressed. What happened next?

53. Wakefulness Within a Dream

Vasishta: Let us follow their discussion in their own words.

The Ascetic: Dear Hunter boy! I already mentioned that I had entered the heart of my disciple. He had just eaten a full meal and had gone to sleep. He entered the deep sleep phase. Because I merged with his mind, I also drifted into deep sleep. After a while, the food was assimilated and the subtle nerve paths were opened up. The life-force in him resumed its movement. With that he passed into a dream state. I also witnessed his dream. The dream world was within his mind, but it appeared to me as if it happened outside him. The dream looked to be that of dissolution. The oceans roiled violently. The lands got inundated by flood waters.

I was living at that time with my wife and children in a village. My house sank beneath the waters. The turbulent flows swept us away in different directions. I forgot about my wife and kids in my anxiety to save myself. A huge wave carried me to the top of a mound. While I was trying to get a hold and pull myself up, another wave hit me. My condition was terrible.

Suddenly I remembered that I was an ascetic and that I was in deep meditation (*samādhi*). I realized that I entered the body of my disciple on purpose and that I had been witnessing a fallacious vision. My misery disappeared at once. But the gigantic waves that I was witnessing did not decrease. The floods did not abate. Even Gods were unable to escape the turbulence. I drifted along with the flow. Yet I did not experience any misery. The deluge appeared like a mirage to me. I remained totally unaffected.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 139.]

The Hunter: My Master! How could you, a saintly man, fall into a delusory misery? Why did you not negate the phantasm through meditation?

The Ascetic: There are two types of Dissolutions. One progresses slowly and the other is sudden. We get time to meditate and observe other practices only during gradual dissolution. There is little scope for such things if it is a sudden dissolution. Moreover it did not strike my mind at that time to meditate. That was my fate! Apart from that, please recall what I said. All these things happened during a dream. Nothing is impossible in a dream.

The Hunter: But why do you then tell me these fictitious stories?

The Ascetic: No, these are not just empty words. There is a profound message hidden within them. If you understand clearly that the dream world and the stories there on are untrue, you will realize that the wakeful world and the life here also to be equally untrue. This will lead you to know that whatever is perceived, be it in a dream or be it in the wakeful world, is illusory. The next step will then be to realize that there is a potent seer (*drik*) who experiences these illusions uninvolved, that he is real and he is none other than "you." This is actually the thrust of the story. So let me continue.

Slowly the perilous deluge of water receded in the dream world. I safely reached a mountain peak. I looked around and found the hermitage of a sage. I went to the hermitage. I rested there for a while with the permission of the sage. Sleep overcame me as I was too tired. I had another dream during the sleep. Because of the preceding events, I again dreamt of a huge deluge of water. My sorrow doubled. The dream within the dream ended and I woke up. This awake state was part of the first dream. I appeared as a sixteen year old boy.

Not only did I look like a teenager but my experiential feeling was also that of an adolescent. I had parents, ancestors, relatives etc. in the dream world. I spent a long time at the hermitage of one of my relatives.

I did not recall any of my past knowledge of scriptures at that time. Because of the effect of my past associations and practices, I was born as a villager like the individual who was born as a fish in the story of Daama-Vyaala-Kata.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki employed an unusual expression at this juncture.

विस्मृता तादृशाभ्यासादहो तस्येव मत्स्यता ।।

vismṛtā tādṛśābhyāsādaho tasyeva matsyatā ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 140, Sloka 33

Meaning: Because of the practices of village life and the fish quality in him, the past knowledge came under a cloud.

The above meaning does not make any sense. Hence the Commentator, Shri ABS, introduced a slight alteration and interpreted the word "him" above to mean the individual (*jīva*) in the story of Daama-Vyaala-Kata. The story of Daama-Vyaala-Kata appears in Yoga Vasishta, Book 4, Sthiti Prakarana, The chapter on Sustenance from the 25th to 31st Sargas.

A demon by name Sambara in that story created three illusory individuals, Daama, Vyaala and Kata. These three individuals did not have any innate tendencies inhered from the past. But because of the contact they had with others during the wars between the gods and demons, they acquired new impressions. They were subjected to the cycle of births and deaths as an effect of these new impressions. Finally they were born as fish. It is possible that the author alluded to the story of Daama and others in order to emphasize the fact that the type of company we keep could affect our future lives.]

The Ascetic: (Continuing) I lived in that village for a hundred years as a normal family man with my family, traditions and worldly life. During that time, a guest visited us. He was a saintly man who realized the Self. He stayed with us for the day and narrated his experiences. In the course of the conversation, he lectured on Truth extensively. The essence of what he taught was as follows:

सर्वं चिन्मात्रमेवेदमनन्तमविकारि च ।
जगत्तयेव कचति यथास्थितमपि स्थितम् ।।

sarvaṃ cinmātramevedamanantamavikāri ca |
jagattayeva kacati yathāsthitamapi sthitam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 140, Sloka 43

Every object within the world has an end. There is also an end for the entire world. Further, everything in the world is subject to change. So also the whole of the world is subject to change.

A close examination, however, reveals that the world is nothing but Consciousness-Self. There is no other thing. Consciousness-Self is subject to neither an end nor a change. Consciousness-Self, remaining as It is, seems to appear as the world.

54. A Macrocosm Beyond A Macrocosm

The Ascetic: (Continuing) Thanks to the power of his teaching, my ignorance was dispelled within a few minutes. I could recollect my past knowledge and reenter the yoga of concentrating the mind. I remembered clearly that I entered the body of another individual using the yogic techniques of body-swapping. I visualized the individual into whose body I had entered to be the Macrocosm (Virat). At the same time I wanted to come out of that body. But I could not find a way out. I moved around the vast space within that Macrocosm. While I remained within him, I expected that the individual who was the Macrocosm for me would have another Macrocosm surrounding him and desired that I should witness the other Macrocosm too.

As I was not able to find a way out, I conceived myself to be the life-force of my Macrocosm. With that thought cropping up, I locked myself into it with my mind focused on the idea that "I am his life-force." I could come out of the Macrocosm riding on his life-breath without stirring out of my place. My state at that time was comparable to the fragrance of a flower. The fragrance spreads out without actually leaving the flower. Thus I was able to roam in a world that was outside my Macrocosm. As I moved around the place, I found a cave which looked to be the abode of a sage. I found a sage sitting in a lotus posture but appeared to be dead. His students were guarding the body.

When I had a closer look, I discovered that the body was mine only! The people around me were my pupils. The disciple into whose body I entered was still in sound sleep. According to the clock of my disciples, it was just about 48 minutes since I had adopted the yoga of body-swapping.

I did not feel like talking to my students. Besides, I was curious to know what

happened to all the relatives I acquired when I entered the body of my disciple. So I again entered into the heart of my student. I searched a lot to locate my previous relatives. A powerful volcanic explosion occurred at that time in that world. The fire was so intense that even the hard rocks sublimated like camphor. Hot lava flowed as fiery rivers.

I moved through those scorching flames looking for my relatives.

I had already attained Self-Knowledge by then and I was in my subtle body. I lost attachment to my gross body. Therefore, the sizzling fires did not harm me. Yet I was quite tired because of my extensive travels through those violent flames. My thoughts ran as follows at that time. [**Note:** Here ends the Sargas 140 and 141.]

"I entered into the mind of another individual. This is a dream in that mind. I am running in this dream and getting exhausted. What for is this wasteful effort ? Let me be at peace moving on to the wakeful state from the dream state."

The Hunter: Master! You entered the heart of your disciple in order to understand the principles of the dream state. You must have arrived at some conclusive understanding there. Otherwise you may not have left that state. So please let me know what your conclusions were. Secondly you talked of mountains, oceans, different worlds etc. in the mind. Will you please explain how it was possible?

The Ascetic: I investigated my own dreams and also the dreams of my student. Logical analysis showed me that the dreams were unreal. The Principle of Logic that I applied was called concordance-discordance relationship (*anvaya – vyatireka*). The conditional logic states that if A exists, then B will also exist. If A is absent, B will also be absent.

What exactly is a dream world? The name and form constitute the dream world. There is nothing else. Though I observed the names and forms so clearly at the time of witnessing them, they did not have beingess. In fact there was nothing that could cause them. I had no doubt about my understanding.

What then is the wakeful world? It is also a bunch of names and forms. Now the question would be how it came about?

It is obvious that the Consciousness-Self assumed different names and forms and appeared to me as a dream. When I was dreaming, it was my wakeful state within the dream world. I realized that what I perceived as the world during the wakeful state is also Consciousness-Self. I could see that there was no difference between the current wakeful state and the past dream state. What existed then and what exists now is the Supreme Brahman, without a second. You are that. Your thoughts are the veil that is preventing you from arriving at an experiential understanding of this Truth. Whatever is residual after you forego all your thoughts is the real 'you'. That residual Thing is free of sorrow; It has neither an inside nor an outside. It has no limits.

55. The Sheath of Bliss

The Hunter: Sir, you assert that 'thought' is the cause of the world. But past actions were the cause for the thoughts. So we have to say that past deeds were the real cause of the world. Thoughts can possibly be annihilated by the elimination of the effect of past actions. Will you please tell me:

i) Who is subjected to the effect of past actions and who is not?;

ii) Do people without karma have thoughts?;

iii) Is there a need for them to give up thoughts?

The Ascetic: Some of the individuals from the preceding Kalpas take birth at the beginning of the current Kalpa. They are the people who observed highly noble practices and obtained Self-Knowledge during the past Kalpa but were still left with some residual karma to be fulfilled. Such individuals possess Self-Knowledge usually right from their current birth. They get appointed as the principal office-bearers of the present creation. Examples are Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshwar, Sanaka, Sanandana, Kapila and others. Their past karma does not bind them. Yet they act and behave by force of their past habits like ordinary people having thoughts. It is very typical of *jīvanmuktas*.

In contrast, those individuals who feel that they are not Brahman will have to experience karma (effect of past actions).

From the perspective of the *jīvanmukta*, neither karma nor individuals bound by karma have true beingness. Just as we consider the waves or whirlpools to be nothing but water, they consider all people (liberated or in bondage) and both worlds (dream and wakeful) to be appearances of Brahman.

Even if some residual karma exists for Self-Realized people like Sanaka, it does not bind them. Karma binds down only individuals without Self-Knowledge. Hence elders maintain that the root cause for bondage is ignorance and not karma. They commend a study of the scriptures for obtaining the Knowledge of Self.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 142.]

One would be able to realize Pure Consciousness-Self from a study of the appropriate scriptures. On realization one understands that the mind is the world and the world is the mind.

I experienced the above matters when I was in my pupil's Anandamaya Kosha (The Sheath of Bliss). I observed there the sum total of my impressions, the impressions of my disciple and also the impressions of the people connected with both of us in the form of three worlds. There was no fitting external space, which is different from Consciousness and capable of supporting the three worlds. There were no causal factors enabling the appearance of the three worlds.

Even then, I could witness them. From that I could deduce that the three worlds and the three states in those worlds were unreal and what in fact I observed was Pure Consciousness.

[**Note:** Here end the Sargas 143 and 144.]

All of us perceive objects. How do we do so? We observe the objects with our sensory organs during the wakeful state. We take them to be real. Does the inner organ, mind, function during our perception? Yes, surely it does. At the time we notice the objects outside, the mind kicks up some experiences internally. But the mental experiences are not firm. They are a bit flaccid like wilted flowers.

When the sensory organs fold up and turn inwards, the inner organ (mind) gains strength. It brings into our experience strong internal emotions and inner scenarios. The mind generates within its inner world external sense organ also. The individual then feels as if he is witnessing a world outside himself through those external senses. This gives a feeling to the individual that he is seeing a physical and solid world projected as external to him

The individual functions in the same manner in his wakeful state also. He thinks that the objects seen through the senses are stable and solid. Like he did during dreaming. Thus the real cause for the perceived solidity within the objects lies within the sensory organs and not in the objects themselves! Hence strictly speaking, there is no real gross world at all !

56. Exploring The Subtle Nervous System

The Hunter: Master ! The senses are the creation of the mind during the dream state. Therefore, the world witnessed through them may lack solidity. But the senses during the wakeful state are not the creation of the mind. How can we deny solidity to the world perceived through these senses?

The Ascetic: How did the external sense organs come about in the wakeful state? You may recall that we analyzed this during our discussion on the layers of superimposition that I-consciousness assumes on itself. We saw the sense organs to be no more than a mental construct. I shall explain the process by which we are able to see the objects in the dream world once again from a different perspective. It will help you to understand clearly the fact that the senses during the awake state are an imagination.

When the sense organs get exhausted during the wakeful state, the individual *jīva* withdraws his inner organ (mind) and enters the blood vessels in the heart. If he enters into the blood vessels filled with *kapha**, he experiences gentle, charming and ecstatic events like moonlit sky, serene lakes with blossoms of water lilies, lovely damsels in festive celebrations, casinos, delectable gastronomic cuisine, enchanting river confluences etc. If the individual joins the blood vessels filled with *pitta**, he will notice scary, violent and atrocious events like burning flames, hot sand dunes, blazing spheres, ferocious wild beasts etc.

If he enters the blood vessels full of *vāta**, he will experience confusion and bewilderment. Examples are: earth quakes, mountain caves reverberating with thunderous sounds, pots rotating without a support, flying horses, weird creatures riding on birds, gods moving along celestial paths, young girls in panic, himself as fallen into deep wells, or uprooting trees and hills etc.

[**Note:** * — *vāta*, *Kapha* and *Pitta* represent forces in the human body. *vāta* is the biophysical force causing nervous, psychic and catabolic phenomena. *Pitta* is biochemical force causing enzymatic, thermal and metabolic phenomena. *Kapha* is biochemical and physical force causing anabolic and nutritive phenomena.

Normally *vāta, kapha* or *pitta* do not occur alone in a blood vessel. They always occur together blended in different proportions. Depending on their relative concentrations, the experience of the individual keeps changing. There could be innumerable kinds of experiences. It is not possible to codify all of them. Sometimes you may see huge mountains falling as hail in a storm. You may hear the hills speaking. You may find every green plantation burning. You may notice oceans filled with stones. Or you may observe the Great Bear constellation exploding. An infinite variety of dreams may occur.

After spending some time in dreams, the individual enters the *purītat* nerve located near the heart. This subtle nerve occurs within the rib cage.

[**Note:** The name *purītat* was not mentioned by Sage Valmiki. He described it merely as a hole. The name was assigned by the commentator Shri ABS.]

The *purītat* nerve does not contain adequate space for the individual to move about. So the movement he gets from the life-force is arrested. As a result he stays put like a ball of clay. This is the state of deep sleep.

After a while the nutritive substances in the body undergo changes and the individual gets space to move inside the *purītat* nerve. He goes out of the nerve, gets back his movement from the contact of life-force and re-enters the dream state. Thus he moves through different subtle nerves and gains diverse experiences. Variation in the proportions of *vāta, pitta* and *kapha* is the reason for all the differences in the appearances.

The individual is able to see a multitude of objects during his wakeful state because of the senses. He is able to witness a multitude of objects during the dream state because of *vāta, pitta* and *kapha*. That is all the difference between the two states.

The individual may sometimes face bizarre situations during the wakeful state. Some people may have strange experiences due to defective proportions in the *vāta, pitta* and *kapha*. They derive happiness and sorrow as an effect of such situations. Others may call them to be mad but form their own perspective, it is a real experience for them.

We may now conclude as follows from the above findings:

एवमेतदसद्भूतं सद्भूतमिव भासते ।।

evametadasadbhūtaṃ sadbhūtamiva bhāsate ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 145, Sloka 75

During the wakeful and dream states the individual witnesses non-existent things as existing and existent things as non-existent owing to the sensory organs and the effect of the trio *vāta* etc. respectively.

What truly exists is Consciousness only. The sense organs are the superimposition by the mind on Consciousness. Hence there is no particular reality in the objects seen during the wakeful state. I found out the above things when I investigated the dream state of my disciple.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 145.]

The Hunter: What happened after that Sir?

The Ascetic: I merged my subtle body with his subtle body and proceeded ahead. Suddenly a windstorm arose. It gradually intensified to a tornado lifting trees, houses, mountains etc. high up into the air. When I examined carefully, I found that the nutrient particles were churning vigorously in his blood vessels. Those particles appeared to me as huge mountains. However, I could not withstand the suffering. I was unable to move and remained still. I felt as if darkness enveloped me and my consciousness was frozen. This is the deep sleep state.

After a while, the secretions in the blood vessels were assimilated. The mind within me blossomed again like a flower. As the mind arose, I re-entered the dream state. That means to say that I shifted from the totally relaxing state of deep sleep into the dream state of the sleep cycle. The moment the mind arose, that very moment, its natural ally, the world arose again. Just like an embryo develops and comes out of its mother's womb, the objective world originates in the 'deep sleep world' and comes out of it.

57. Origination, Appearance and Beingness

The Hunter: My Master ! I am confused. You used the expression 'the deep sleep world.' How can deep sleep be a world with perceivable objects ? Is any object perceived there ? Moreover, you said that the world of objects arose anew when you were moving within the subtle nerves of your pupil.

Do you mean to say that the present visible world is different from the world arising out of the deep sleep state of your disciple and also the world arising from your own deep sleep state?

The Ascetic: My Dear, first consider carefully the meaning of the words: being born; appearing; and shining. Everyone in the world uses these words mechanically. Their usage carries a dualistic connotation. People don't dwell deep into their meaning. Some of us analyze the word's meaning from the point of view of grammar. Most of you go by conventional practice. Whatever may be the approach, if you think deeply, all these words mean one thing: it "is." What 'is' has always been there. It is neither born nor will die. If you notice birth or death, it is because of ignorance. Birth and death do not have real validity i.e. true 'beingness.' From such a perspective:

सर्वसत्तात्मकं ब्रह्म सर्वसत्तात्मकं जगत् ।
विधयः प्रतिषेधाश्च वद तत्र लगन्ति के ॥

sarvasattātmakaṃ brahma sarvasattātmakaṃ jagat |
vidhayaḥ pratiṣedhāśca vada tatra laganti ke ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 146, Sloka 19

The Supreme Brahman is 'Beingness' only. The world is also 'Beingness'

In other words, Brahman and the world are nothing but Beingness. How then can you apply the words 'is or not is' to either Brahman or the world?

The Hunter: But we do see in the world things either being or not being. Why is it so?

The Ascetic:

या नाम शक्तिः काचित्सा तत्रैवास्ति च नास्ति च
यस्मात्तदात्म तद्ब्रह्म तथैवात्म तदात्मकम् ।।

sarvasattātmakaṃ brahma sarvasattātmakaṃ jagat |
vidhayaḥ pratiṣedhāśca vada tatra laganti ke ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 146, Sloka 20

It happens so because of the power of *māya* (Illusion). Maya is a weird and wonderful power. You may say it is embedded in the Supreme Brahman. Or you may say it is not embedded in the Supreme Brahman. Brahman seems to be the support for *māya* when viewed from a state of ignorance. So you can take it that *māya* is another form of Brahman. Expressing it differently, we may say that under the growing power of *māya*, the Supreme Brahman appears to be full of inconceivably bizarre powers. From the position of Self-Knowledge where dualistic thinking ceases, one can understand that *māya* lacks 'Beingness.' That is the reason why I said that *māya* could be taken to be existing or non-existing. Knowers of Truth consider the three states of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep to be unreal though they are seen to be present. The three states lack a form. The world too had no form at the beginning of creation. An individual is the onlooker of the wakeful, dream and deep sleep worlds which are a part of creation. The Supreme Brahman is the onlooker if you consider the entire creation as one unit.

The aforesaid statements are based on the assumption that there is creation. But we realize that creation does not exist when we are endowed with Self-Knowledge. With creation itself being understood to be non-existent, the respective onlookers, the individual and Brahman cannot exist. When a cognizer is not there, there is no one to talk about 'my world', 'the world of my disciple' or a 'new world'. It is much less possible to definitively say whether the worlds were the same or different. Anything said would depend on the specific point of view; there is no absolute answer. Hence let us leave it here and proceed with what happened next.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 146.

One of the questions posed by the Hunter was about perceivables during deep sleep. He asked: "How can deep sleep be a world containing perceivable objects ? Is anything perceived there?"

Sage Valmiki did not answer this question. He might have presumed that the answer was obvious. The reflected I-consciousness is dissolved during deep sleep. Consequently, Knowledge remains in a pure state during deep sleep. It illuminates the nescience (ignorance) which is present there. In other words we get an experiential feeling that nothing is being known. Because there are no sense organs available at that time, that particular feeling is not cognized. But it is recollected as a memory after we wake up. We can derive from this that ignorance is the object seen during deep sleep and the world seemingly appears to emerge from the deep sleep state. Evidence for this understanding comes from Sankara's Laghuvaakya vritti. The fourth verse states:

जागरस्वप्नयोरेव बोधाभासविडम्बना ।
सुप्तौ तु तल्लये बोधः शुद्धो जाड्यं प्रकाशयेत् ॥ ४॥

jāgarasvapnayoreva bodhābhāsaviḍambanā |
suptau tu tallaye bodhaḥ śuddho jāḍyaṃ prakāśayet || 4||

Shankara's Laghuvakya Vritti - Verse 4

(Meaning: The showmanship of reflected I-consciousness stands out only during wakeful and dream states. He is dissolved during deep sleep and pure Knowledge illuminates nescience then).

We shall now resume the narration of the Ascetic.]

58. Back To The Old Life

The Ascetic: When I came out of deep sleep, I suddenly saw a new world. The sudden appearance of the world resembled the emergence of an erstwhile submerged world. As I kept staring at it in surprise, I found my old village there. I saw my wife and children, relatives and others. I felt very happy seeing them and embraced them affectionately.

You can understand my condition at that time. I was not yet stabilized in the Knowledge of Truth. My mind was overtaken by the old impressions. Such a thing would not happen now. My position at that time was like your condition at the present. Self-Knowledge was very clearly understood by me when I was alone in contemplation. But my mind swayed like a cradle when the old impressions surged up inside me. You are like that now. You cannot cross this state unless you practice rigorously.

The Hunter: Master! What you say is very true. My mind is rocking like a swing. I have a few more doubts.

You say repeatedly that dreams are unreal and so is the wakeful world. Yet learned people say that the dreams occurring in the last part of the night turn out to be true. For example, it is said that if a person dreams of having an elephant ride, he will earn high profits the next day. We find this to be true from our experience also. The dreams of midnight are said to have no effect. Thus the declaration of the dream experts seems to be that a part of the dream world is true and another part is untrue. But you assert that all dreams are untrue. Why so?

The Ascetic: Popular belief says so not only about the dreams in the last part of the night but also about some other dreams. For example, there is a procedure laid down for the worship of the Goddess of Dreams. The worshippers believe that they foresee the future happenings in their dreams. They also claim to have many experiences in support. But if you critically examine, what lies behind their experience is their belief structure. Whoever entertains an unwavering faith on the worship of the Goddess of Dreams and related matters, they surely notice concordant results. If a person does not have a strong belief, the results are uncertain for him. Thus it is clear as the day that the correlation observed between the wakeful and dream worlds is based on mere faith and is not intrinsic to those worlds. Let me put it bluntly:

तदैषा काकतालीयन्यायादन्या न लभ्यते ।।

tadaiṣā kākatālīyanyāyādanyā na labhyate ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 148, Sloka 4

(Meaning: All of it is nothing but another example for the story of the Crow and the Palm Fruit).

[**Note:** The story of the Crow and the Palm Fruit refers to the Doctrine of Spurious Correlations.

There was a palm tree with a very well ripened fruit that was about to fall off. A crow happened to chance upon the fruit and approached it. Just as the crow was alighting on the fruit, it (the fruit) got detached from the tree and began its descent. Without knowing this fact, the crow thought that the fruit dropped down because of its own (crow's) weight. It was crow's imagination But several people watching from below also thought the same way]

The important point to be noted is that the written texts on dreams go by spurious correlations. It is not correct to say that a part of the dream turns out to be real.

Further:

न बहिर्नान्तरे सन्ति पदार्थाः केचन क्वचित् ।
संविदेका जगद्रूपैर्यथेच्छति तथा स्थिता ।।

na bahirnāntare santi padārthāḥ kecana kvacit |
saṃvidekā jagadrūpairyathecchati tathā sthitā ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 148, Sloka 7

The truth is that there are never anywhere any real objects either in the world out there or in the dream inside you. What is, is Consciousness only. It exists as those worlds and in whatever form It wants to be.

Thus the differences within the wakeful, dream and deep sleep states is as much as the difference between the melted and solidified ghee (ghee is melted butter). If you can internalize this fact well, there is hardly a need to reiterate what was said earlier.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sargas 147 and 148.]

The Hunter: Very well explained Sir! Please proceed with your narration.

The Ascetic: I said that my wife and children appeared to me. I became very possessive of them. I spent sixteen years with them without any time devoted to philosophical self-inquiry. One day an aged learned sage paid a visit to our house. We welcomed him as our guest and served him in an appropriate manner. Then I posed a question to him.

59. Collective Joys and Sorrows

The Ascetic: Respected Sage! Elders say that each person is on his own with respect to sin and merit (*pāpa* and *punya*). We are also told that one would reap good rewards from merit and sorrow from sins. At the time of famines and natural disasters everyone in the land is exposed to the same sort of misery.

If such a thing has to happen, we will have to say that millions of people committed at the same time the same type of sin in their past. That looks to be quite an improbability. What then is the cause for so many facing the same misery at one time?

The Aged Sage: (Looked at the Ascetic with raised brows and posed the following counter question): My Dear! Your mind has matured to be able to discriminate between truth and untruth. Because of that you desire to understand the reason behind the happenings in the visible world. So far so good. But what means are you using to know your mind?

The Ascetic: (Kept quiet with puzzled looks as he did not know what to reply).

The Aged Sage: (Continuing) Try to remember properly. First of all, who are you? Where have you come from? What have you come to ? What is all this that is seen? What exactly is it ? Try to recollect all this.

Are you unable to recall? Don't you remember that all of this is a dream? You are also a dream character! I am another dream character. Don't you see this?

Look around and observe. What you notice is the expanded form of Consciousness-Self. Consciousness-Self has a strange characteristic. If Consciousness-Self thinks of a thing, that thing takes shape right there. Therefore,

सकारणत्वकलनात्सर्वमस्य सकारणम् ।
अकारणत्वकलनादस्य सर्वमकारणम् ।।

sakāraṇatvakalanātsarvamasya sakāraṇam |
akāraṇatvakalanādasya sarvamakāraṇam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 149, Sloka 17

If That (Consciousness-Self) thinks that there is a cause for all the objects seen, yes then, there is a cause. If It thinks that there is no cause, yes again, there is no cause. Whatever we now conceive as collective or individual also depends on Consciousness-Self.

We are all in fact the dream characters within the dream of an individual. He is our Macrocosm (Virat Purusha). From his own perspective, he is a separate individual and not a Macrocosm. Virat Purusha is a concept developed by us for our notional understanding. Each individual is considered to be a Macrocosm for a group of creatures.

Depending on the thoughts of the Macrocosm and the consequent changes in the secretions within his blood vessels, the polar pairs of happiness and sorrow befall on the creatures living inside him. The effect may show up on a single individual or on an entire group of creatures within him. The reason for the famine and other natural hazards are the imbalances within the *kapha, pitta* and *vāta* of the Macrocosm.

We find material causes behind the objects of the dream-like world of ours. For example we find a lump of clay to be the reason for what is seen as the pot now. But if we consider the world as a whole, we are unable to locate an opposite causal factor. A thing that originates without a proper cause cannot be considered to be a true substance having beingness. Hence what really exists is Consciousness-Self and not the perceived world. This is quite evident for us as far as the dream world goes. We usually find this logic hard to accept when it comes to the wakeful state.

However, a careful investigation reveals no difference at all in the way we experience the dream world and the wakeful world! This insight led the Knowers of Brahman to pronounce that both the dream and wakeful worlds had similar origination. Hence they concluded that the wakeful world is also non-dual Supreme Brahman.

The Ascetic: If the causal substance is real, the effect has also to be real. The lump of clay is real. The pot coming out of it too is real. The Supreme Brahman is Real. Therefore, the world also has to be real. How then can you say that Brahman is without a second?

The Aged Sage: You cited the example of a ball of clay being turned into a pot to contend that the world is real. It is okay as far as that goes. Extending your argument, every 'thing' in the world should have a cause. What then is the cause for space? You do not find any convincing cause. Because space appears without any cause, we have to agree that it is unreal. If space is unreal, how can various things within it like the earth etc. be real? Your logic fails at this point. Hence, Brahman alone is True. And it is without a second.

The Ascetic: If that is the case, how are we able to see the different things in the world?

The Aged Sage: It is because of your imagination. As more and more the imagination firms up, harder and more solid the substances of the world appear to be. The illusory perception continues on and on the same way it had begun. The thought pattern of the initial imagination of Hiranyagarbha persists to date. Only very rarely does it change. Several millions of people may together at one time commit sins or perform meritorious acts and reap the corresponding consequences as a result of the thought pattern of Hiranyagarbha.

The carry home message from all this discussion is that the world is illusory and that Brahman alone is Real.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 149.]

The Ascetic: (Now addressing the Hunter): Huntsman, My Boy! I gained perfect Self-Knowledge from the comprehensive teaching of the aged Sage. I turned into an ascetic again. The aged Sage stayed back with me out of compassion for me. He is the man relaxing in the adjoining room. You may meet him.

60. Dreams Are Untrue Just Like The Wakeful World

The Hunter: Master, what you narrated was the dream experience you had when you entered the mind of your student. How can the man who appeared to you in your dream be present now in our wakeful state in your house ? How can he be visible to me ?

The Ascetic: Let me continue with my story so that you can understand these things.

I felt very grateful to the aged Sage for his teaching. I reflected a lot on what he taught. I understood that the entire world was a phantasm. It was obvious to me that the Guru-disciple relationship also was a part of the illusion. I realized that Brahman alone existed. Because there was no other thing than Brahman, it was clear to me that there was nothing to be relinquished. I shared these experiences with the aged Sage once. Our conversation went on the following lines at that time:

The Ascetic: Maharishi! When I was an ascetic, I left my body and entered the body of my student. I want to go back and see the position of my old body. Kindly permit me.

The Aged Sage: What old body are you talking about? Fire engulfed long back your old body, your disciple's body and the hermitage where you had lived. They were all burnt down to ashes. You may go and verify for yourself, if you so desire!

The Ascetic: (Addressing The Hunter): I couldn't believe my ears when the sage said so. I wanted to check. I took up focused meditation. Before taking up the meditation, I requested the sage to remain right there till my return. He kindly consented.

I entered Yogic fire and assumed the form of wind. Earlier I had entered the body of my student through the opening in his throat. I searched all over the space for that entry point. I did not find it anywhere. I could not locate any other door to get out. I got very tired after a strenuous hunt. Finally I returned and asked my Guru, the sage.

The Ascetic: (Now addressing the Aged Sage): Maharishi! What happened? In spite of my intense search, why was I unable to find the path linking this world with that of the earlier one?

The Aged Sage: My Friend! You desired to see the old body directly from the perspective of the gross physical world. It is impossible to do so. If you wish, you may see it with your yogic vision.

The Ascetic: Why is it so?

The Aged Sage: You wanted to investigate the three states of awake, dream and deep sleep. With this objective you entered the body of your student using the yogic technique of body-swapping. When you were involved with your research, there were huge forest fires outside. Your hermitage was burnt down. Along with it, your and your disciple's bodies were burnt to ashes.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 150.]

Therefore, you are unable to find a path to the old bodies. You had a different body in the initial stages of your investigation. Moreover you were in the dream state. Because of habituation, the same state got transformed into the wakeful state for you.

तदेवं स्वप्न एवायं जाग्रद्भावमुपागतः ।

tadevaṃ svapna evāyaṃ jāgradbhāvamupāgataḥ |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 151, Sloka 9

In the present state, I am a dream character for you. You are a dream character for me. What truly exists here is Consciousness-Space. It is within itself. You may enter into meditation and discover it by yourself. You will then understand!

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 151.]

The Ascetic: (Addressing The Hunter): My Huntsman! My teacher informed me so and went into sound sleep. I could not sleep at all. I sat up contemplating these issues the whole night. My Guru got up at day break. I said to him:

एवं स्वप्नो विभो सर्वः सद्रूप इति मे मतिः ।।

evaṃ svapno vibho sarvaḥ sadrūpa iti me matiḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 152, Sloka 2

Maharishi! As I keep thinking about it more and more, it seems to me that the dream world is real!

The Aged Sage: Oh, My Goodness! You seem to think that either both the dream and wakeful states have to be real or both have to be unreal because there is no difference between the two states. You consider that it is not possible for one to be real and the other to be unreal. Some Pundits theorize that the wakeful world is unreal. But everyone believes dreams to be unreal. You thought over the matter during the night and concluded that dreams could be taken as real because everyone strongly believed that the wakeful world was real. Yet you are not sure of your conclusion. That is why you say "seems to me."

There is, of course, a valid reason for your incertitude. It is true that everyone believes in the reality of the wakeful world. We can accept it provided we can find convincing evidence for the world to be real. A scrupulous analysis shows to us that the wakeful world lacks even that slight tinge of reality that a dream world has!

The Ascetic: How is that possible?

The Aged Sage: No wonder you are going to be the Guru for a hunter. That apart, let me tell you what is involved here. What exactly do you understand by the word "real"?

The Ascetic: If there is a proper cause behind an effect, we can describe the former to be real. Because there is a lump of clay behind the pot, the clay is real. We do not have a similar cause behind the silver in nacre. Hence silver is unreal.

The Aged Sage: Such an approach will lead us to some cause or the other to be present behind a dream. The experiences during the wakeful state get converted to impressions (*samskara*-s = innate tendencies). These impressions create new five fundamental elements. Hence we may postulate that the impressions are the causal factors behind the five elements of the dream world. Though dreams may lack a gross cause, they have at least a subtle cause in the form of impressions. Hence we may attribute some reality to the dreams. Unfortunately, the wakeful world does not have even this type of reason behind it.

The Ascetic: Will you please explain again?

The Aged Sage: Okay, can you think of any possible reason for the five elements of the wakeful state?

The Ascetic: I will say that the earth is caused by water, water by fire, fire by wind, and wind by space.

The Aged Sage: Does that not mean that the final source for everything in the wakeful world is space? How can you then attribute reality to them?

The Ascetic: We may postulate that the impressions of the people of the past Kalpas (Periods) are the cause for the substances of the current Kalpa.

The Aged Sage: Even if we grant that, it amounts to a tacit admission that the substances of the wakeful world lack a physical causation. In addition, it may be acceptable if you assume that past impressions survive for short durations of time. But it is not reasonable to say that the past impressions manage to survive over long periods.

Scriptures tell us that a gap of one Kalpa occurs between two creations. It is not logical to say that the past impressions remain as they were over such long periods. Hence, we cannot ascribe even as much of a reality to the wakeful world as we can to that of the dream world.

Wise men therefore come to a decision that the wakeful world is untrue and hence the dream world too is unreal ! But it is not the other way round.

A dreamer believes in the reality of the dream during dreaming. He has no doubt about it. You went into meditation from a dream state. You looked for some things. Then you returned. How can you now suppose the dreams to be real? Are you speaking from the position of meditation or the state of the dream? Or is that your stand based on logic? Your thinking remains invalid from any consideration.

61. The Future Story of The Ascetic

The Ascetic: Maharishi! What you say sounds very reasonable. But please tell me why you called me the Teacher of a hunter. Is it just to ridicule me or is there a hidden message in that?

The Aged Sage: No, No! It was not to make fun of you. I foretold your future. You were actually an ascetic in the past. You are now a householder here. I am your guest. Our friendship grew. So you desired that I should continue my stay with you. I accepted your courtesy and stayed here. You will resume your Yoga practices in my presence. After some time a terrible famine will strike the land. As a result, many of your relatives will die. In the meanwhile a war erupts among the local kings. The native villagers run away unable to face the brunt of the disasters.

By that time you will also abide firmly in detachment. Hence both of us will remain unconcerned and continue our stay in a nearby forest. After a time the entire area becomes a thick forest.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 152.]

Several wild animals and a few hunters will settle down here. One of those hunters develops friendship with you. You will begin to teach him several things. One day he will question you about dreams. In response to that question you will instruct him everything on Self-Knowledge. That is how you will be his teacher. I will be still staying with you at that time. I can foresee from my yogic powers that what I said is going to happen. Hence I referred to you as the Teacher for The Hunter.

The Ascetic: (Now addressing The Hunter): I was surprised at his words. I analyzed myself introspectively. My thoughts at that time were:

"I see various things – hills, rivers, space etc. around me. I also see myself. Who am I? Am I the earth? Am I the water? Am I the fire? Am I the wind? Am I the space? What are the five elements? If we examine critically, we do not find any of the Five elements.

नेमेऽद्रयो न चेयं भूर्नेदं खं नायमप्यहम् ।
चिन्मात्रव्योमकचनमिदमाभाति केवलम् ।।

neme'drayo na ceyaṃ bhūrnedaṃ khaṃ nāyamapyaham |
cinmātravyomakacanamidamābhāti kevalam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 153, Sloka 16

These are not hills. This is not earth. This is not space. This "me" is not I. All of this is the illumination of the Consciousness-Space. The space like Consciousness transcending space shines in this form.

Why should it take this particular form? It appears to take that specific form because of our illusion. What is the cause for the illusion? Does any cause exist at all?

My student into whose mind I entered with an intention of investigating various things was burnt to ashes. Even I was burnt down. But I am still there. I am able to think.

तस्मादिदमनाद्यन्तं चिदाभामात्रमम्बरम् ।

tasmādidamanādyantaṃ cidābhāmātramambaram |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 153, Sloka 20

Hence his body was unreal. My body was also unreal. The entire visible world is the reflection of the Supreme Consciousness. It is like empty space. It does not have a beginning. There is no end either. There is neither an agency for action nor any action. Nor any enabling tools are available. What can then cause the fallacious appearance? I am unable to find an answer. Yes, there can't be an answer! It is my mistake to think this to be the illumination of Consciousness-Self. Consciousness-Self does not possess illumination. Illumination Itself is Consciousness-Self !

नापि चिन्मात्रकचनं चिन्मात्रं व्योम केवलम् ।

nāpi cinmātrakacanaṃ cinmātraṃ vyoma kevalam |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 153, Sloka 22

Consciousness-Self is untainted space. And that is the world you see." Thus were my thoughts on that night !

I was quite clearheaded by the next morning. It was obvious to me that I am not the doer of the actions I do or the experiencer of the objects of the world. From then we have been staying here abiding firmly in that understanding. The subsequent events took place as per his predictions. You joined me as my disciple.

The Hunter: My Master ! The sum and substance of your teaching is that this entire world is a dream. Right? You are a disembodied dream character. But you seem to group me along with you! The gods of the scriptures are also considered by you to be of the same type. You label every one as a dream character for every other! Is that the truth? Is everyone non-existing though apparently existing?

The Ascetic: Yes. There is no doubt in that. I explained the logic that underpins the above conclusion. I told you about the experience of myself and my Guru. In spite of all this, you are unable to rid yourself of the belief that the world is real. Three things are mandated for the full realization of the Truth. These are: Being an understudy of a Guru, scriptural knowledge and practice. You are quite intelligent. Mull it over in your mind and find out for yourself.

[**Note:** The Story of the Corpse formed a part of the narration by King Vipaschit who attained Self-Realization. He was briefing the assembly of kings and nobles about his experiences in the august presence of Sage Vasishta and Rama in the Royal Court of Dasarath, the King of Ayodhya and Rama's father.

King Vipaschit escaped at the last minute from being crushed under an enormous corpse hurtling down from the sky. He prayed to The God of Fire and enquired from Him the reason for the crash of the corpse. In response to the query, The God of Fire related the story of the hunter to King Vipaschit.

The long meandering story has so far talked about two saints, one hunter and their confabulations. Sage Valmiki continued the remaining story in the words of The God of Fire. Here ends the Sarga 154.]

62. The Future Story Of The Hunter

The God of Fire: My Dear King Vipaschit! The Hunter could not deny the words of the Ascetic so definitively pronounced. He could not also digest the fact that the world so solidly visible lacked beingness. He thought over the matter considerably. He surmised that Brahman who was Pure Consciousness had a special power called "nescience" and that the world originated under the powers of nescience. He felt it was, therefore, reasonable to assume the world to be real.

But he could not resolve his doubts on the extent of the world and what laid beyond. He wanted to find the answer by a personal visit to see the boundaries instead of surmising by conjecture. His decision was:

तस्मादाकाशमप्यस्ति यत्र नो तत्र याम्यहम् ।।

tasmādākāśamapyasti yatra no tatra yāmyaham ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 155, Sloka 7

I will reach the place where even space does not exist and find out things by myself.

He performed severe austerities with the above goal. He developed contacts with many saints and ascetics for this purpose. He increased his longevity using the power of his meditation and thus could perform the austerities for thousands of years. He visited many sacred places.

The Hunter met with his old teacher during one of those travels. He felt flustered on seeing the Guru. He observed the placid state of the Guru and was desperate to know when he could achieve it. The Guru pitied his condition and addressed him as follows:

The Ascetic: I had already instructed you what all there is to be taught. But you could not grasp it as you lacked good practice. On the top of it, you desired to find out the limits of ignorance. So you performed austerities. You meditated for thousands of years. It proved to be insufficient. However, you are a highly determined person. You will continue with your austerities and meditation. Because of your query and out of my love for you, I shall look into your future with clairvoyance. I hope by knowing your future, the *sattva* quality in you will improve. Please follow carefully what I am going to predict.

You will pursue your austerities with your firm resolve for a hundred yugas. God Brahma will manifest before you. The following conversation will ensue between you two

God Brahma: My Son! Please express what your desire is.

The Hunter: Oh The Lord of the Gods, God Brahma! I learnt a lot about Self-Knowledge. I understood that the Supreme Brahman is like a mirror. The world appears to us as an image within Him. If the mirror happens to be much larger than the image within it, a part of the mirror should be without an image. I wish to personally reach that place where no reflection exists. In other words I want to find the place where ignorance is not present and only Pure Consciousness exists.

May my body expand by several miles each second! May my body extend till I reach the place I wanted to! May I die only when I desire after I reach that place!

God Brahma: It will be so!

The Ascetic: After receiving the boon from God Brahma, you will rise to the skies like a kite. Your body keeps expanding as you go up. You travel in that way for millions of years. Your body inflates to several millions of miles in size.

You will fly higher and higher but will never be able to see the end. You get tired and look back. You will look at your expanded body. You will be scared of your own hulk. You will think as follows:

अविद्या बत घोरेयमनन्ता च प्रमीयते ।
मीयते न च केनापि ब्रह्मज्ञानं समं विना ।।

avidyā bata ghoreyamanantā ca pramīyate |
mīyate na ca kenāpi brahmajñānaṃ samaṃ vinā ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 155, Sloka 43

"My Goodness! Truly horrible is nescience. There are no boundaries to it. No one can find its limits. Nothing can cross it except for the undifferentiating Knowledge of the Supreme Brahman.

I have to seek the association of noble people and study scriptural texts in order to obtain Self-Knowledge. The present body is unsuitable for either of these practices. I shall get rid of it right away."

As soon as the above thoughts come to you, you will leave the body using breath control techniques under the power of the second boon granted to you by Brahma. Immediately your colossal bulk will plummet like a collapsing mountain range. The individual within the body remains in the sky.

When your body crashes to the earth, the habitations and mountains will be pulverized. Goddess *kālarātri* along with her cohorts will arrive and devour your body. Slowly life will restart on the earth. Thus would be the strange effect of the austerities and meditation performed by you.

The Hunter: Goodness Gracious! What an effort and what a result! My Master, is it for this sort of misery that I'll perform the rigorous austerities and meditation? Please tell me if there is a way out of it.

The Ascetic: My Son! You may be able to close or open your fingers or toes. But you cannot make a short man tall or shorten a tall person.

ज्योतिःशास्त्रार्थविज्ञानैरिह भाव्यर्थवेदनम् ।
भवत्यन्यदपूर्वं तु न किंचन कदाचन ।।

jyotiḥśāstrārthavijñānairiha bhāvyarthavedanam |
bhavatyanyadapūrvaṃ tu na kiṃcana kadācana ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 155, Sloka 55

We may know the future using astrological science. But you cannot change it! Whatever has to happen will happen.

There is only one exception to this. Noble people who would have acquired the Self-Knowledge transcend the karmas. Therefore, the effect of past actions will not impinge on them.

The Hunter: Sir, you said that even after my huge body would fall down, I would continue to be in space. What will happen to me later ?

The Ascetic: After the bulky body drops down, the individual along with the life-force moves on to the Avyaakrita space. Avyaakrita space is the space element within the subtle five elements. He will be like a tiny speck in the extensive space. Both the life-force and mind contract into that speck. The individual will begin to see in his mind a land and a large world surrounding it as an effect of his past deeds. It will be like seeing a new world in a dream. As a further effect of the past impressions, the individual makes a false claim of ownership of the world and feels that he is the lord over the terrain. He does not stop with that. He feels he is the Emperor Sindh and that he commands many satraps.

He does not stop there either. He thinks that his father was dead when he was eight, he ascended the throne at that young age and that there was a powerful enemy king by name Vidurath in the neighborhood. He thinks that a war will be inevitable. He begins to see the very things he thinks about. King Sindh spent a hundred years in these visions. Finally a war will erupt with Vidurath. King Sindh kills Vidurath.

[**Note:** The above is the same story that was recounted under The Story of Leela in the third Chapter: Creation. However, the story was narrated at that place from the viewpoint of Vidurath. Not much was expressed there about King Sindh. The story is being retold here from the perspective of King Sindh as an event that will happen in the future.]

63. A Lesson to The King From The Minister

The Ascetic: My Huntsman! The ministers visit King Sindh to congratulate him on winning the war. One of the ministers is comparable to a great sage (Maharishi). The dialog between the King and the Sage Minister will go as follows:

Minister: Dear Sir ! Your victory over Vidurath in the war is quite astonishing.

King Sindh: What is there to be astonished ? Can he ever stand before my might?

Minister: Dear King! Vidurath has a wife by the name Leela. She is a very saintly woman. Goddess Saraswati manifests before her every day. Our strengths and kingdom are nothing in front of the Goddess Saraswati. Even so, you triumphed. That is the surprise.

King Sindh: Yes, I heard about that. What you say is true. It's unfathomable why Goddess Saraswati did not help them in the war!

Minister: Dear King! Vidurath prayed to Goddess Saraswati for attainment of Nirvana. He had no other desire in his worship. Therefore, he got liberated.

King Sindh: I too have been a devotee of Goddess Saraswati. Why did I not get liberation?

Minister: Did you ever pray to her for liberation? I don't think so. Your prayer had always been for crushing your enemies. So you got your wish fulfilled.

King Sindh: You are right, Minister. From this aspect, Vidurath was undoubtedly the victor though he is dead. But Goddess Saraswati bestows intelligence. She ignited the desire for liberation in him. Why not in me !

Minister: Sir, Gods hardly grant wishes on their own. They go by the mindset of their devotees. That is their principle. You have the impressions (*vāsanas*) priming you in your mind to go for the destruction of the enemy. Hence your mind is not inclined towards liberation.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 156.]

King Sindh: Who was I in my past birth? Why did I acquire such evil tendencies?

Minister: My Dear King! It is a divine secret. But because you have raised this question, I shall tell you. Hope it proves beneficial to you ! Elders classify the living creatures in the world into twelve groups. 'Inert within inert (*tamas* within *tamas*)' is one such group. You were born in that group in your past birth.

[**Note:** In the 93rd Sarga of the Chapter: Creation under the section "Varieties of Bodies", Sage Vasishta described fourteen groups of bodies. He said that two groups were duplicated. So he finally classified them into twelve groups. The same issue is once again raised by him here. We shall avoid repetition and proceed with the story.]

King Sindh: My Dear Minister! You say that an entire group of creatures belongs to the type 'Inert within inert.' Who christened the groups with such names?

Minister: The nomenclature would not have lasted if somebody were to have popped up assigning names at a later time. The seed for the total creation lies in the first thoughts of Hiranyagarbha. The inexorable Laws of Nature denoting the characteristics of a group are built into his initial thought processes. Thus did the 'Inert within inert' group originate. You were born into that group in one of your past births.

King Sindh: Past births?

Minister: Yes, Sir. You did go through many strange and colorful births. I know them all. But you are unaware. You were born as a hunter at one time. You were very brutal as a huntsman. You do not have a desire for liberation even today because of that.

King Sindh: Is there no way to cleanse myself from those unholy innate tendencies of the past?

Minister: There is no thing in the three worlds that cannot be secured if a man strives hard for it with resolve. Each person works for what he wants. If his effort is not interrupted in between, he will definitely achieve it. One can get rid of the past evil effects by adopting a pious life now.

The Ascetic: During the course of this discussion, the minister instructs King Sindh on the attainment of Supreme Brahman. As a result, the King loses his evil tendencies immediately, abdicates the throne to his children and proceeds to forest lands for serious introspection. Eventually he obtains liberation.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 157.

The God of Fire has been narrating to King Vipaschit the story of the huge corpse that had a great fall. The conversation between The Ascetic and The Hunter is a part of that story. The dialog between King Sindh and the Minister occurs within and as a part of the conversation of The Ascetic and The Hunter.

The God of Fire continues with the narration.]

The God of Fire: Oh, King Vipaschit! The Hunter was stunned to learn that his current evil ways will haunt him for several epochs. Both the Guru and the student remained silent for a long time. Later they went to perform their ablutions.

Both the Guru and the student returned to the hermitage. The Hunter by then could compose himself a little. The two of them resumed their serious philosophical discussions. Not long after, the teacher obtained liberation without the body (*videhamukti*). The hunter continued with his austerities and deep meditation.

The surprise is that everything happened to the dot as foretold by the Ascetic. The hunter couldn't alter anything, though he was aware of all the things.

This is a story that happened in one of the worlds in this creation in which there are billions and billions of multiverses. The corpse crashed to the earth there and the fat within the corpse gradually got converted to soil.

The world where all this happened looks to be real to you. We see it as a dream.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 158.]

My Dear King! Whatever had to happen, happened. Our perspectives are different. Lord Indra is now performing the hundredth ritual of sacrifice in the Heavens. He's messaging me through his ministers. He wants me to be present there. I have to leave now. You may proceed on your mission in the direction of your choice.

[**Note:** King Vipaschit reported the above dialog between himself and the God of Fire as a part of his narration in the Royal court of King Dasarath. Now he continues with the story in his own words.]

64. King Vipaschit's Birth As A Deer

King Vipaschit: The God of Fire left immediately for Indra's court. Due to my past impressions, I wished to investigate the last point of space where ignorance ended. So I resumed my travels. I saw a multitude of worlds. Yet I could not find the end of ignorance. Having searched and searched, I was disgusted and exhausted by the time I reached one particular world. I did not feel like moving anymore. I settled down there and commenced austerities and meditation in order to obtain Self-Knowledge.

After a few days the Lord of Gods, Indra, of that world visited me. Our conversations went as follows:

Indra: (With a Laugh) My Dear King! Why do you struggle like this? In my case as well as that of yours, we have an obstruction on our path to Nirvana. We have to go through the life of an animal before we get liberated. Therefore, this is not an appropriate time for Self-inquiry.

King Vipaschit: Oh, The Lord of Gods! I am just an ordinary man. Maybe there is a residual sin that will cause the life of an animal for me. But it is quite surprising that a very pious god like you also has to go through it !

Indra: Yes, it cannot be helped. Because of my past habits, I was ensnared by the luxuries in Heaven. I ill-treated the Sage Durvaasa in my avarice and became a victim for his curse. Hence, I too have to go through the life of an animal like you. Anyway, you may ask for a boon if you wish.

King Vipaschit: Lord! I am completely exhausted running around the infinite creation. I wish for early Nirvana. That is the only boon I yearn for.

Indra: Liberation is dissolution into Pure Consciousness transcending names and forms (*nāma* and *rūpa*). You have known about this already in the Story of The Hunter. Nobody can bestow Nirvana. Hence please request for another boon.

King Vipaschit: In that case, kindly let me know what will happen to me after my life as an animal.

Indra: My Dear King! The animal life that both of us have to go through is the life of a deer. It will be a long time before it will happen. Luckily for you, you will reach the Court of Rama in your life as a deer. You will achieve the realization that "I am the Pure Consciousness-Self" under the benevolence of Sage Vasishta there. You will leave the body of the deer and get back the earlier human form. You will burn away your attachment to the body with the fire of Knowledge. May everything be auspicious for you! I shall take leave now.

King Vipaschit: (now addressing the Assembly in the Court): King Dasarath! The idea that I would be a deer got firmly planted in my mind after Indra's departure. Eventually, I was born to be a deer. I was caught by one of your satrap kings and brought here as a gift for Rama. Oh Mighty King ! Respected Audience of this Court! That was my story. It is not possible for anyone to find the end of nescience in the absence of Self-Knowledge.

Rama: Oh, King Vipaschit! I have a small question. The form of a deer took shape only in your thoughts. But all of us could see an actual deer with our own eyes. It amounts to say that the things that originate in one man's thoughts can be seen by others who are not related to that man's thought process. How is this possible? After all one cannot witness the dream of another!

King Vipaschit: Rama! It is possible for such things to happen by virtue of the boons granted or curses given by Maharishis, gods and others. In my case Sage Durvaasa cursed Indra to suffer the life of a deer along with me. Indra blessed me that I would enter into the royal assembly of Rama. That is the reason you are able to see me.

This is my response from an empirical perspective. There is another answer from the absolute perspective. Let me tell you that also.

If you search deeply and truthfully, you will find that everything arises in the Supreme Brahman. All things exist in the Supreme Brahman. In fact everything is a form of the Supreme Brahman. Supreme Brahman is all. This is the well known truth. Who can then lay down rules and restrictions for Supreme Brahman that something is possible and something is not possible. Hence it is correct to say that the thoughts originating in one mind cannot be known by another mind. It is equally correct to say that they can be known.

अहो नु विषमा माया मनोमोहविधायिनी ।।
विधयः प्रतिषेधाश्च यदेकत्र स्थितिं गताः ।
ईदृशी ब्रह्मसत्तैषा यदेवात्मानमात्मना ।।

aho nu viṣamā māyā manomohavidhāyinī ||
vidhayaḥ pratiṣedhāśca yadekatra sthitiṃ gatāḥ |
īdṛśī brahmasattaiṣā yadevātmānamātmanā ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 159, Sloka 41-42

māya (Illusion) which causes possessiveness in creatures is amazing indeed ! Both yes and no get mixed up in it at the same place and time. The Supreme Brahman also has similar powers. It creates Itself by Itself (by Itself means It is Its own instrument).

Further, the ignorance that veils Brahman draws its beingness from the Beingness of Brahman. The fundamental five elements too get their existence from It. The various worlds obtain their beingness from these elements.

If we continue to look in this way, do we consider the diverse worlds to be one or several? Is it possible to say that the visible world and the knowledge or ignorance about it to be real or unreal ?

तज्ज्ञतातज्ज्ञते चेह न सती नाप्यसत्स्थिती ।
सत्ये सदसती चैकं काष्ठमौनमतोऽखिलम् ।।

tajjñatātajjñate ceha na satī nāpyasatsthitī |
satye sadasatī caikaṃ kāṣṭhamaunamato'khilam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 159, Sloka 60

Knowledge or Nescience are neither true nor untrue. Reality or unreality are both true, both are the same! Words lose their validity here. Better to observe Statue-like Silence (*kāśta mauna*).

There are a series of innumerable past creatures and infinite originations at every point in the play of creation. Some are intermixed with others. Some stay separate. What rule can be established about the appearance or non-appearance of a thing in such a pile up of creations? Everything goes by the similarity and dissimilarity in the residual karma of the individuals. There is nothing extraordinary about it.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 159.

King Vipaschit's speech continued till about sunset. The Assembly then rose for the day. Sage Vasishta resumed his discourse the next morning.]

65. Techniques to Conquer The Senses

Vasishta: Rama! Let us assess the salient points coming out of the long-drawn-out story of King Vipaschit. We find that there is nothing like nescience at all! It seems to be present though it does not exist. King Vipaschit failed to find the end point of ignorance in spite of his persistent efforts. The key for this is:

यदा ब्रह्मात्मिकैवेयमविद्या नेतरात्मिका ।
तदास्त्येषाऽपरिज्ञाता परिज्ञाता न भिद्यते ।।

yadā brahmātmikaiveyamavidyā netarātmikā |
tadāstyeṣā'parijñātā parijñātā na bhidyate ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 160, Sloka 12

What is, is Brahman alone. Hence ignorance is also a form of Brahman. It has no independent form of its own. It will appear as ignorance as long as this fact is not known. It does not go away even by knowing it to be so. It just remains as Brahman. If you run after ignorance without grasping this secret, it is like running after a mirage. King Vipaschit's life story illustrates this magnificently.

The visible world cannot be 'existent' under any circumstances. Worlds can appear in space if one strongly conceptualizes them. Hence it can clearly be established that the entire visible world is no more than a mentation.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 160.]

Rama: Revered Teacher! We dream every night. The reason for our dreams is none other than our stored impressions. Earlier you spoke about Lavana. The Great King Lavana witnessed many dream-like worlds. The spell cast by the magician dispatched by Indra was said to be the cause for that vision. In the story of Gadhi, the sage witnessed the world of a hunter, hunter being catapulted to be a king etc. The reason behind Sage Gadhi's strange experiences was the boon granted by Lord Vishnu. We find from these examples that there are two routes by which the worlds may appear:

1. Worlds that naturally emerge like dreams.
2. Worlds that come into sight because of other enabling reasons.

In The Ascetic and The Hunter story described by King Vipaschit, the Ascetic witnessed many worlds. To which type do those worlds belong?

Vasishta: Does that make any difference? As long as one lacks Self-Knowledge, the chain of imaginary worlds goes on and on. If you wave a hand fan, air moves fast. Does it mean that with the fan stopping, air does not move at all? Likewise the fantasizing of worlds continues irrespective of any enabling reasons like curses etc. being present or not.

A new fantasy overwrites the old one. Dream is one fantasy; wakefulness is another fantasy. You declare the dream world to be untrue after you wake up from the dream. A person may pass on to death from the wakeful state. He enters a womb at some other place. He recalls his past births during gestation in the womb. While in the womb, he thinks that his past worlds were unreal. Hence there is no reason to assert that there is a difference between the wakeful and dream states.

Rama: Is it possible to differentiate them based on time period?

Vasishta: Even that is not possible. Some people think that the dream world is of a short duration whereas the wakeful world is long. Hence they hold that dreams are untrue but the wakeful world is real. Such an argument has no basis. It is like saying that one is older than the other in a pair of twins.

Hence it is impossible to differentiate between wakeful and dream states. We have to bear in mind one thing though. Any world (dream or wakeful) appears because of ignorance only. If you are enlightened, the same will be the Supreme Brahman.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 161.

Sage Vasishta introduces the Story of Kundadanta in the 180th Sarga. A prologue for the story is a discourse on Brahman (named as Brahmagita). The nineteen Sargas from 162 to 180 provide the backdrop for the discourse on this topic. We shall present here only a very brief summary of these Sargas because their content merely reiterates what has already been covered.]

Vasishta: There is an important point that you have to pay attention to. There is an individual who experiences the dream world as "I" within the dream. He is a part of the dream. He is, therefore, as unreal as the dream. You are the only real entity as the dreamer at that time.

There is an individual who experiences the wakeful world as "I" in the wakeful state. His beingness is in no way different from the beingness of the "I" of the dream world. He is as unreal as the wakeful world. The Supreme Brahman is the only Real thing that exists. There is no place for even ignorance to be present. One has to conquer one's senses in order to be able to obtain the Knowledge of the Self.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 162.]

Rama: What is the way to conquer the senses?

Vasishta: You may take up pilgrimages, ritualistic sacrifices, performance of austerities etc. etc. But none of them yield true Knowledge. Self-inquiry is the only route to go.

Normally the mind sees the objects in the world to be separate from the Supreme Brahman. Hence it considers the objects of the world as things to be experienced. If the mind is able to take the contrary stand that the objects are non-different from Brahman, it will not see them to be experience-able. Then the mind is not tempted by any of the objects. Once the mind is not tempted by the objects, it will not dwell on them. The senses will then have no work to do. This is the best way to win over the senses.

In case this technique is found to be difficult, one may restrain oneself to perform only such works that are mandated for one's social status and age. Eventually he will develop detachment. Detachment helps in the control of the senses. If one is unable to follow even this, he may practice control of the mental activity and develop a 'focused mind on Brahman.' A 'focused mind on Brahman' is the dissolution of the mind in the Pure Consciousness which is the substrate for all the mentations.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki, in this Sarga on conquering the senses, tactfully interwove the benefits of studying Yogavaasishta with the importance of gaining Self-Knowledge. He declared that repetition is built on purpose into the text out of compassion towards the common folk.

भूयोभूयः परावृत्त्या *bhūyobhūyaḥ parāvṛttyā*

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 163, Sloka 48

The Sage said that anyone considering the redundancy as a waste of time and effort would be a total loser.

भस्माप्याप्नोति नाधमः *bhasmāpyāpnoti nādhamaḥ*

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 163, Sloka 49

We also find in the present Sarga the source verses for some of the famous Bhagavad-Gita slokas like:

या निशा सर्वभूतानां	*yā niśā sarvabhūtānāṃ*	BG. II – 69
मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा	*maccittā madgataprāṇā*	BG X – 9
तेषां सततयुक्तानां	*teṣāṃ satatayuktānāṃ*	BG X – 10

The Sarga contains many verses that can reinforce the single-mindedness of the seekers. Finally the Sage also cautions the blind adherents of tradition. This particular verse, with slight modifications, gained extensive popularity in the texts dealing with morality.

तातस्य कूपोऽयमिति ब्रुवाणाः
क्षारं जलं कापुरुषाः पिबन्ति ।
यथा भवन्तो विविचारवन्त-
स्तथानिशं मा भवताज्ञताप्त्यै ।।

tātasya kūpo'yamiti bruvāṇāḥ
kṣāraṃ jalaṃ kāpuruṣāḥ pibanti |
yathā bhavanto vivicāravanta-
stathāniśaṃ mā bhavatājñatāptyai ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 163, Sloka 56

Some people stick to a well simply because it was inherited from their forefathers. They manage to live with the brackish water of the well foregoing the sacred sweet river waters existing nearby to them. Such people are of low understanding. Some people argue that their elders performed rituals and went on pilgrimages but never practiced Self-inquiry. These people are destined to remain ignorant ! So avoid such traps.

Sage Vasishta thus condemned over attachment to tradition and continued his teaching into the next Sarga.

Here ends the Sarga 163.]

66. Intermingling of Awake, Dream And Deep Sleep States

Vasishta: We diverted to discuss the issue of conquering the senses while discussing the beingness of the so-called "I". The point I would like to drive home is that there is no separate entity called "I". "I" has a seeming existence as a separate entity only because of the constraining mind. If you eliminate the constraint, what you find is the Pure Consciousness. The constraint too lacks beingness. So there is no need to eliminate it. If you understand this clearly, the three words – world, individual and Brahman – lose their meaning. In other words, you have three different words, but what is is only one substance. That substance is Pure Consciousness. This is termed as Identity of World-Individual-Ishvar.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 164.]

We find no difference among the three states of awake, dream and deep sleep when we consider them from this perspective. In fact the three states do not occur without one another. They keep intermingling with each other. For example, a person may be awake but daydreaming. Is the daydream world an awake state or dream state?

Or take the example of a person dreaming. He finds himself to have slept and woken up within the dream. What is the wakeful state in the dream – is it a dream or awake state? Or say, the mind has turned numb when he is awake or while dreaming. Is it then deep sleep or awake state or dream state?

Say a man suddenly shifts from deep sleep to a wakeful world or dream

world. Whoever was there in deep sleep, only that entity has moved on to awake or dream states. Hence the dream and awake states have both contact with the deep sleep state.

We had earlier established that there was no difference between the wakeful and dream worlds. Now firm up this in your mind through the present discussion on the interrelationship of the three states of awake, dream and deep sleep.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 165.]

What exists is the Supreme Brahman alone. Its appearance as an object is termed as '*khyaati'* by a few Pundits. But some opine *khyaati* to be real. They call it *satkhyati*. Some others believe it to be completely unreal. They call it *asatkhyāti*. Yet others hold that there is no *khyati* at all! They say it is *ākhyati*. A few others consider that something else is seen in place of what actually exists. This is *anyadhāakhyāti*. Some experts think that Consciousness alone appears in object form. They call it *atmakhyāti*.

All of these are empty words useful for hair-splitting arguments. *khyāti* means appearing or shining. It can be talked about only if there is another viewer. But Consciousness is without a second. Therefore, the word *khyāti* is untenable in the case of Consciousness. Hence it is impossible to relate the word to Consciousness in any manner.

The truth of the matter is Consciousness itself is *khyāti* ! Consciousness is the brilliance! Consciousness and Brilliance are synonyms. If we agree to this, we may establish some relation between them. The entire world can be considered to be a huge crystal from this perspective. There is no opening to drive a chisel into it. But somehow a variety of lines appear at its center. One of the lines is you. Another line is me. But the whole crystal is Pure Consciousness. Better not to get into the arguments about the *khyāti*-s. Understand the Consciousness-Self which transcends the three states of awake, dream and deep sleep.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sargas 166 and 167.]

In view of the Reality of Consciousness-Self, I proposed that the creation is a superimposition on It.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 168.]

A man who experiences this truth is free from happiness and sorrow.

Rama: Would that not make him inert like a stone?

Vasishta:

जात्यश्ववदिहाजातिरश्नन्गच्छन्श्वसन्वदन् ।
लोकमध्ये महारण्ये हा शेते सुखमात्मवान् ।।

jātyaśvavadihājātiraśnangacchanśvasanvadan |
lokamadhye mahāraṇye hā śete sukhamātmavān ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 169, Sloka 26

Rama! A high pedigreed war horse will be partly sleeping even when running, eating, neighing etc. It stays fully alert only in a battle. Likewise, a *jīvanmukta* who has transcended the cycle of births and deaths will remain happily asleep having united with the Self whether he is amidst a crowd or alone in a thick forest. He is not affected by the polar opposites of the usual humdrum world. But he will not be like an inert rock. I have already described to you many times the way a *jīvanmukta* functions.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 169.]

A *jīvanmukta* is one who has erased all his karma. It does not mean that he will behave unrestrained. His best friend is his mandated action. Equanimity and compassion are his wives. Knowledge is his gate-keeper. Sacred bath, alms giving, performance of austerities and meditation are his children.

A *jīvanmukta*'s daily ritual is to brush off the perceptions**.** He does not differentiate the world from Brahman.

देशाद्देशान्तरप्राप्तौ विद्धि मध्यमसंविदः ।
जगदित्यपरं नाम स्वरूपादच्युतात्मनः ।।

deśāddeśāntaraprāptau viddhi madhyamasaṃvidaḥ |
jagadityaparaṃ nāma svarūpādacyutātmanaḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 171, Sloka 23

We discussed previously Consciousness-space during the story of Leela in the Chapter: Creation. I defined it as the intermittent substance that is present in-between two objects, when the thought wave of the mind travels from one object to another. This is the instruction given to Leela who was in a state of ignorance.

The perspective of a *jīvanmukta* is different. From his viewpoint the space in-between two objects when his mental thought wave travels from one object to the other is the "world." This difference in perspective arises because a *jīvanmukta* never shifts from his original position of Consciousness-Self . Hence he experiences only Brahman irrespective of which way his thought wave travels. He does not see two separate substances — a world and Brahman. These are just two names for the same.

We talk of the world sometimes as an illusion and some other times as Brahman. If you are a seeker and are trying to understand Brahman, begin considering

the world as a fantasy. Try to unite with the worldless Brahman. If you look back after the attainment of Self-realization, the world will still appear, provided there is some remnant tendency of past karma left in you to show a world. Even then, the world appears as Brahman.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 171.]

Rama, I made a mention about mentation (modulation of the mind in the form of a thought wave) while explaining the above issues. Some experts suggest that the world, like the dreams, originates from memory. They contend that the dreams have to be real as they have their genesis in the experiences of the wakeful world. According to their argument, the memories of the past epochs cause the appearance of the wakeful world in this kalpa. The world has to be real just like dreams. But we have already established through diverse methods that the world was unreal. Therefore, we cannot admit that the world is generated out of memory. We have to say the world is illusory.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 172.]

Because it is an illusion, it looks as though it is made up of part inert and part conscious matter.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 173.]

You perceive a mix of inert and conscious things in a dream also. But after you wake up you agree that both the conscious and inert things of the dream were you yourself. In the same way after you achieve Self-realization all the perceivables will get erased and Pure Consciousness-Self will remain.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 174.]

You have to follow the methods as approved by scriptural texts in order to be able to reach such a state.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 175.]

I enquired once from my father, Brahma, with regard to this matter. He explained to me that billions and billions of universes stay packed in the miniscule particle of Consciousness. He substantiated his statement citing many examples. I dealt with these matters in the third Chapter: Creation.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 176.]

Rama: Willy-nilly, your position is that nothing caused the creation of the world. You have taken the dream as a metaphor for this. If there is no cause for the creation of the world, there should be no need for the production of anything in this world. For example, we should be able to get crops without rain. Would anybody accept it?

Vasishta: Rama, I am talking about the cause for the entire world. But you are talking about the cause-effect relationship which is a part of the created world. Even within

your dreams, you find certain cause-effect relationships. But would that make the dreams any more real? Similarly, there may be certain cause-effect relations in the wakeful world. We do not deny it.

If we consider the whole world including all the parts in it like pots, cloths, various objects, mirages, magical things etc. together, and search for a cause, we do not find any tangible cause. Had it been there, we would have found it. Hence we assert that a cause is absent. We take the Vedas and the experiences of *jīvanmuktas* as further support.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 177.]

As evidence, I recounted the real story of Indavas in the Chapter: Creation. The ten Indavas, the sons of a Maharishi were able to create spheres of universe merely by their thoughts. It is a direct proof. Therefore, any questions on how the formless could produce a form and sustain it have no validity.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 178.]

These questions keep popping up because there is still a lack in fully grasping the indestructible Consciousness-Self. One has to study this discourse again and again in order to obtain a thorough understanding.

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta highlighted the importance of his teaching three or four times in the last ten Sargas. Sage Valmiki used every such occasion in underlining the glory of Yoga Vasista.

Further, he dropped several hints to indicate that thios Yoga Vasishtra, Book 7, Nirvana Prakarana, uttrārdha, the current Chapter on Liberation is of great consequence. Maybe Rama too was a bit tired of the repeated emphasis. His next query is on the effect of the teaching.

Here ends the Sarga 179.]

Rama: Revered Teacher! You talked about the significance of this scripture many a time. My friend Kundadanta is in this assembly. He is a devout Brahmin and a genuine spiritual aspirant. Do you think that he achieved Self-realization from your sermon?

Vasishta: Why do you raise a question specifically about him?

67. The Story of Kundadanta

Rama: (to Sage Vasishta) **:** We had an unforgettable conversation between us some time ago.One day I came to know about a get together of scholars in his town. I went there to attend the meeting. While intense discussions were going on, a bright looking young Brahmin youth joined the audience. For some reason I felt that he was an accomplished seeker. So I introduced myself to him during a break in the session and conferred with him. Our dialogu went as follows:

Rama: (to the Brahmin) : Sir ! You look very exhausted. Perhaps you are coming from

a long distance. You also appear to be working real hard for something. That could be the cause of your exhaustion. Where are you coming from?

The Brahmin: Respected Sir! I am a Brahmin from the city Videha. My parents named me Kundadanta. I studied Vedas as per our family tradition. I admit I am a bit caught up by renunciation. The scriptural knowledge I had, seemed inadequate.

So I embarked upon a tour searching for noble and accomplished people. I reached the Srisaila range during my travels. I searched for Self-realized sages in the forests and caves in those mountain ranges. I witnessed a strange scene during my wanderings.

It was a vast plateau. It was quite bald with not even a blade of grass growing. There was a big tree at the center of the flat land. The tree had long branches. I found an elderly man hanging down with his legs tied to one of the branches of the tree. On closely examining him, I understood that he was in deep meditation. I was really taken aback that he could perform such severe austerities alone in that large forest exposed to the sun and rain. I was very upset about it. I couldn't leave him and go.

I stayed back there and attended to him. Gradually he developed confidence in me. I gathered my courage and asked him one day who he was and why he was performing such a rigorous practice. He did not answer me for many days. Later he expressed displeasure at my questions. Still later he questioned my intention. After many more days, he replied.

The Observer of Austerities: My Dear! I belong to the city of Mathura. I mastered the scriptures when I was quite young. Whatever may be the knowledge of a person, luxury and comforts are enjoyed only by the kings. So I had a strong desire to become an emperor. I did not find a way to become an emperor other than through the performance of austerities and meditation. I came to this pious land and started on a rigorous routine. Twelve years have passed by now. No one bothered to enquire about me. I do not know where you have come from or what for. You were kind enough to befriend me and talk to me. I told my story because you were curious. I cannot be of any help to you. Please leave me alone and go away.

Kundadanta: (Addressing the Observer of Austerities) Pardon me, My Master! I cannot leave you and go away. I shall stay here serving you.

(Now resuming his talk with Rama): He did not respond to my words. He remained in stoic silence and became stiff. I could not make out whether he was dead or alive. I was initially a bit worried. Later on I could make out that he entered into deep meditation. I stayed there continuing my services to him without minding the heat and cold. Six months had gone by thus.

One day a god shining with the brilliance of the sun manifested in front of him. Maybe it was because of my service or whatever, God was visible to me also. He did not talk to me. He addressed the meditator facing him directly.

The God: Oh Best of the Meditators! Please halt your meditation. You will be an emperor as desired by you. You will rule unopposed for seven thousand years.

So saying God disappeared. The ascetic opened his eyes after God's departure. I pleaded with him to end his meditation. He finally consented. I climbed up the tree, cut the ropes and brought him down safely. I plucked a few fruits from the same tree, extracted juice and made him break his fast. He could not move much because of pain in his legs. We spent three more days below that tree. He requested me to accompany him to his place. We set out on our journey to his town.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 180.]

It was a long journey. We passed through the village Rodha and the township of Salisa. We crossed many more villages, forests, rivers and so on. When we reached one particular forest, the Meditator said to me as follows:

The Observer of Austerities: Kundadanta! There is a hermitage by name Gauri Ashram nearby here. Seven of my brothers are meditating here. We are eight brothers. All the eight of us desired to be emperors. We came together to this Ashram for performing austerities. I did not like the place and moved on to Srisaila range after about six months. My brothers must be here. Let us look them up. It may be a slight diversion, but please do not mind.

Kundadanta: (Now talking to Rama): I agreed and both of us went to see his brothers. Surprisingly we did not find anybody in spite of our intense search. Nor could we locate any hermitages. After roaming around a lot, the ascetic could finally identify the area. But there were not many trees and what few there were were chopped down.

Small saplings were just taking root. As we pursued our hunt, we found a large Anthocephelus (*Latin*: Adina cordifolia = Kadamba) tree and a sage meditating beneath it. We were greatly relieved to find him.

We wanted to talk to the sage. But he was in deep meditation and did not respond to our queries. We waited for a long time for him to arise from his meditation. But he did not even stir. As I was still young, I lost my patience and shouted loudly asking him to wake up. With that sound, he slowly opened his eyes, yawned and looked around. Finding us, he anxiously threw a volley of questions at us.

The Sage: Sirs! Who are you? I must have been in the Gauri Ashram. How am I here? Who brought me here and when? Which is this year?

Kundadanta: (Now talking to Rama): The ascetic with me did not speak. I replied that we were unaware of any of the things he was asking us. Partly with a tone of poking fun at him, I added that he was such a great meditator and that he himself could find out everything through his meditation rather than soliciting the information from us. He did not mind the innuendo at all. He agreed and meditated for a short while. He quickly resumed his talk with us and narrated a very weird story.

The Meditator Beneath the Kadamba: Respected Sirs, I could see my story. And yours too! Please listen to these odd developments.

Once upon a time, Goddess Gauri meditated in this region assuming the form of Vagiswari for about a decade. This area was named after her. She meditated beneath this very tree. She was hence known as Kadamba Vagiswari. Later on she left this area. Since then this tree has not been growing old. After the Goddess was gone from this region, a few lumberjacks settled here. All the big trees around were cut down by them. As this Kadamba tree looked small, nobody touched it. Even today this tree remains very small. That is the story of this tree. Now I shall come to my story.

I was the King of the country, Malava. As I grew old, I abdicated the kingdom and moved to a forest for meditation. I searched around quite a bit to locate an abode of great sages. I reached this Gauri forest area in the course of my search. Many great sages used to live here at that time. They welcomed me and encouraged me to meditate sitting beneath this Kadamba tree. So I stayed back here. After a while eight brothers came here for meditation. The eldest one is this gentleman here. He stayed here for a few months and left for Srisaila range. The second one went southwards. He worshipped God Kumaraswami there. The third one had gone to Kasi. The fourth one left for the Himalayas. The rest of the four lived here and meditated.

Surprisingly all the brothers had the same wish – to become an Emperor. Their meditations yielded the desired results for them. There was some delay in the case of the eldest one. The other seven brothers reached their homes and have been leading lives observing the prescribed rituals as per scriptures.

Sometime after the departure of the four brothers, there was a paucity of water and food resources. Because the great sages were not supposed to carry out agricultural practices for a living, all the Maharisihis of this place dispersed to various other places.

A group of lumberjacks migrated to this place at that time. They named this Kadamba tree as Gauri Kadmaba. They worshipped it. They looked after me also well as I was meditating beneath it. I spent most of my time in *samādhi*. That is my story.

I already mentioned this ascetic while narrating my life story. Both of you are now on your way to Madhura. Please proceed as per your plan. His brothers and relatives are awaiting his arrival. Please go soon.

68. Mutually Opposing Boons And Curses

Kundadanta: Respected Sir, I have a small doubt. The eight brothers had the same wish. They got boons sanctioned at one time. So they have to become Emperors at the same time. But there is only one land available. How can they all be Emperors simultaneously?

The Meditator Beneath the Kadamba: Yes, what you say is quite puzzling! But there is still a bigger puzzle.

The eight brothers have eight wives. They are pious and devoted to their husbands. When their husbands left for the forest for meditation, they were depressed. So they started meditation at their own homes. They observed special rituals like Chandrayana and worshipped Goddess Gauri. The Goddess was pleased with their worship. She manifested in front of each of them. The Goddess asked them to express their wish. All the eight asked for the same boon that their husbands should not die. The Goddess smiled and told them that the inexorable Laws of Nature conceived with the first thoughts of creation were impossible to be violated by any one. She said that nobody could transcend them. Hence she suggested that they should ask for another boon. The eight virtuous ladies consented. They requested her to grant a boon such that the individuals (*jīvas*) of their husbands after death should not leave their house. The Goddess granted their wish. This is not all. There is yet another complication.

When the eight brothers left for forests for meditation, their parents felt lonely and developed a sort of detachment. They did not want to stay at home and went on a pilgrimage. During their travels they met with a short ugly looking man on the outskirts of a village called Kalaapa. He was obstructing their way. He was dark and had applied ashes all over his body. His body was covered with stiff hair. He had an odd looking face and appeared to be a hardened beggar. The old couple was disgusted seeing the loathsome fellow. They rudely asked him to stay aside, jerking their hands. Some dirt from their hands fell on the head of the short man.

The short man who had had empty looks in his eyes thus far suddenly turned violent.

He abused them in chaste words.

The Short Man: "Hey, you dirty old hag! Why are you so arrogant ? Is it just because your wife is beside you? I am Durvaasa. You are lost in the thoughts of your sons and daughters-in-law and did not care for me though I am right here in front of you. May all the boons that your sons and daughters-in-law obtained so far be overturned!"

The Meditator Beneath the Kadamba: (Continuing the Story): Hearing the name of Durvaasa, the old couple shivered from head to toe. They wanted to fall at his feet begging for pardon but Durvaasa disappeared by then.

The take home message, Kundadanta, is that many such highly unexpected things keep occurring in this illusory world.

Kundadanta: Oh Sir, you are confusing me! The eight brothers have to become Emperors in their next birth. But their *jīvas* cannot leave their respective houses. Their boons have to yield fruit. So also the curses have to show their effect. How can all this be possible?

The Meditator Beneath the Kadamba: I shall foretell what is going to happen to the eight brothers out of affection for you. Their story will clear your doubts.

You will reach the city of Madhura on the eighth day from today. You will spend a long time happily there. The eight brothers will die within a short span of time after that. The Consciousness-space in their subtle bodies will witness certain strange scenes. They will find the boons appearing in the form of peaceful goddesses and the curses appearing as fierce-looking goddesses in those scenes.

Both the groups of the goddesses will fight amongst themselves to be the first to show their respective effect. They argue about the order of their precedence and relative superiority. Unable to resolve, they reach a compromise to request Brahma for arbitration. Accordingly they go to Brahma and place the case before him.

Brahma takes the dispute lightly and asks them to decide for themselves based on their respective internal strengths. They take Brahma's permission and enter into the hearts of each other – the goddesses of curse into the hearts of the goddesses of boons and vice versa. After a while, the goddesses of curse come out. They present their finding to Brahma as follows:

Goddesses of Curse: Lord Brahma! We are the weak-hearted. The other group has hearts as strong as steel though our bodies are alike. The same Consciousness that bestows a boon also sanctions the curse. When an individual secures a boon through righteous means his *jīva* merges with that of the Goddess of the boon. Hence the strength of that Goddess goes up. The Goddesses of boon gain additional strength by virtue of the scriptures. Thus the strength of the Goddesses of boon is tripled.

In contrast, the strength of the *jīva* of the men who receive the curse does not get added to us. Further those who are subjected to curses would have committed some sins. So their inner strength gets reduced. As a result, their inner strength does not get added to us. It is clearly advantageous for the Goddesses of boon.

The brothers' boons acted first. So the boons got firmly rooted and were sturdy like the plants that were sown first. Boons originated from the strength of the scriptures. Curses come from the sins committed inadvertently.

Sometimes it may so happen that a latter occurring event may take precedence. For example the first misapprehension of seeing silver in nacre is disproved by the later correct knowledge that it is an oyster shell only and not silver. Silver appears because of the short lived apprehension due to the defective vision. The subsequent correct knowledge is free from defects in perception. Hence, though it dawns later, the knowledge that it was an oyster shell is more lasting.

Examined from any angle thus, the inner strength of the Goddesses of the boon is stronger in the case of these individuals.

In the case of some people, the actions can be equally good and bad. They perform both good and bad actions with equal vigor. The boons and curses they get will be equal and they will experience a mix of happiness and sorrow in equal measure.

It so happens sometimes that an individual has to experience equally and simultaneously happiness and sorrow accruing from different regions. Then that individual obtains a variety of experiences in the dreams wherein he himself becomes the King, a poor citizen, a friend, an enemy and many such divergent forms. Thus the experiencing of happiness and sorrow happens at the same time. If the strength of the boons and curses is still stronger, it happens like in the story of Vipaschit – the same one individual obtains multiple forms and goes through the happiness and sorrow at one time.

Lord Brahma! Please condone our long harangue in your presence. Kindly excuse our misdemeanor. We shall leave now.

The Meditator Beneath the Kadamba: (Resuming his own narration): The Goddesses of Curse will leave after informing Brahma as above. The Goddesses of Boon will then split themselves into two subgroups. One subgroup is that of the boons acquired by the husbands. The other is the subgroup of the boons obtained by the wives. The husband side subgroup would like to take the *jīvas* to different universes and make them all Emperors at the same time. The second subgroup will not want the *jīvas* to leave the house. They quibble considerably on this. Brahma will intervene and tell them as follows:

God Brahma: Goddesses of Boons! Please listen to me. I will suggest to you the way to go about fulfilling the boons of both the husband and wife sides. Make the brothers as Emperors right in the rooms of their house. You help each other to accomplish it.

Goddesses of Boon: How can we do that Lord ? Each of the brothers desired to be the Emperor for the entire earth. There is only one earth here. It is not possible to bestow Emperorship to all of them simultaneously on this earth. Nor is it possible for us to compress the enormous earth into any of their rooms. Is it possible to squeeze an elephant into a tiny tinderbox?

God Brahma: How come you say that!? You appear as separate individuals. I have a Collective form. All of us are at the center of the subatomic-particle-like Consciousness. How do we exist in it ? We are in It in the same way a vast dream exists within the center of the particle-like Consciousness-witness who is the dreamer. That being the way the world is, why do you question compacting the earth within a room?

Is it difficult to fit the earth in a room when the entire universe exists within a subatomic particle? What is, is Consciousness-Self alone. The world exists only in appearance. It lacks beingness. In other words, the only existing thing, Consciousness, appears as the world. So there is nothing impossible in this imagined phantasmagoria.

Goddesses of Boon: Thank you Lord. We could see the point. We shall give up the gross bodies, move into subtle bodies and proceed to our mental abodes. Next we will show to the eight brothers the vast lands of the earth within their rooms created through their own imagination called mentation. We will make them the Emperors of those worlds. Once the fantasy begins, each individual (*jīva*) will be on his own leading a separate life. Each of the brothers will get to occupy one of the Isles of Saka, Kusa, Salmali-1, Krauncha, Salmali-2, Gomedhi and Pushkara. The eighth one will be in the mountain ranges of Lokaaloka. They will spend their lives as Emperors roving around those places. We shall leave now, Sir.

The Meditator Beneath the Kadamba: Kundadanta! Everything is going to happen as foretold by the Gods.

Kundadanta: I am still unable to appreciate how this can happen. Do you mean to say that this huge earth is going to appear right in their rooms?

The Meditator Beneath the Kadamba: That's how the Pure Consciousness-Self works! Though It is unaffected by the world, It takes the form of the three worlds and also as awake, dream, deep sleep and Turiya. It experiences these by itself. But It remains as Itself while these actions go on. That is Its nature.

Kundadanta: Does that mean that appearance in multifarious forms is the true characteristic of Non-dual Consciousness-Self?

The Meditator Beneath the Kadamba: No, I do not say that the multitude of forms that appear in the Non-dual Consciousness-Self are true. They are the result of illusion. For example the appearance of dual moons due to a faulty vision does not mean that two moons actually exist. The second moon is an illusion owing to a defect in the eye. Similarly, the appearance of the world is an illusion caused by ignorance.

This ignorance continues because of the Laws of Nature formed with the first thoughts of the creator. For the same reason we see the world to have a concrete shape. In fact every person can create his own world in this way. The eight brothers too will originate their respective empires through imagination.

I have explained many things to you. You will gradually understand the rest. Now, you should get going. I cannot be out of the Samadhi state any longer.

Kundadanta: Rama! So saying, The Meditator Beneath the Kadamba closed his eyes and within no time became firm like a rock. Both of us tried to talk to him. But he did not respond. We left the place and eventually reached the city of Madhura.

The elderly Observer of Austerities received a grand welcome on arrival in the city. The younger brothers celebrated the event with gaiety with worship of their family deity, worship of married ladies, feeding the Brahmins etc.

I stayed with them in their house. In course of time, all the brothers expired as predicted by The Meditator Beneath the Kadamba. I could not withstand their grief. Not knowing where else to go, I returned to The Meditator Beneath the Kadamba. He was in deep meditation. I waited patiently this time. He opened his eyes after three months. I bowed down before him and posed several of my doubts on philosophical issues. He stared at me with a bit of uneasiness. He addressed me as follows:

The Meditator Beneath the Kadamba: My Boy! I am unable to stay out of Samadhi for a prolonged time. You need to have some practice in order to understand the Supreme Truth clearly. Your preparation is inadequate. So you will not understand even if I tell you. I do not have much energy either. Let me suggest a way out for you.

Emperor Dasarath is the ruler of the city of Ayodhya. His son is Rama. Detachment is developing in Rama. Their Family Guru, Sage Vasishta is about to give an extensive explication of the scriptures in a large assembly. Usually such philosophical instructions are given in private. But out of compassion to all, Sri Rama and Sage Vasishta are conducting their discourses in open assembly. You will certainly obtain Self-Realization if you listen to their discussions. Therefore, proceed to the City of Ayodhya. Try to get entry into that assembly. Please get going. I have to go back to my meditation.

Kundadanta: Rama! He hardly ended his words and went back into deep Samadhi. Thus did I come to your city inspired by my teacher. I have been lucky to meet you directly. Kindly let me enter the Royal Court.

Rama: Maharishi Vasishta! Revered Teacher! Kundadanta whom I met thus on that day is here in this assembly. He has been listening to your instructions all these days. That is why I have asked you if he has attained Self-Knowledge and if all his doubts have been clarified.

69. Ignorance is Also Brahman

Vasishta: Where is the need for me to say anything? Let us ask him directly.

(Now addressing Kundadanta): What do you say, Kundadanta! Could you understand the essence of Truth? Have you gained Self-Knowledge? Have your doubts been cleared?

Kundadanta: Oh, Greatest of the Sages! Maharishi! My Salutations. Yes, now I am totally free of doubt. I have learnt what all has to be learnt. I understood fully the nature of Consciousness. I realize that even a tiny mustard seed can contain infinite universes within it. I could also understand experientially that there are no worlds at all from an Absolute point of view. I can see clearly that a question on how a large earth fits into a small room has no locus. What every creature experiences in the world is only The Supreme Brahman. The ignorance they experience is also Brahman. There is nothing whatsoever anywhere anytime beyond Supreme Brahman. That is the last word!

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 185.]

Vasishta: He is a Great Man Indeed! Congratulations to you, Kundadanta!

Kundadanta is in perfect peace having attained Self-Knowledge. He perceives ignorance and the world thereof as none other than Brahman. The Creation (Brahma or Brahman admixed with illusion) is not a contradiction to Pure Brahman. It is so because even nescience is Brahman. Brahman appears as the world owing to the past impressions of the individual (*jīva*). Just because of this false appearance, duality cannot be the Truth.The Supreme Brahman stays unaffected and immutable under all conditions. It is thus obvious why the world has no beginning or end.

Rama: We see that the dream world begins after a deep sleep and ends with a wakeful state. Logically therefore, the wakeful world too must have a beginning and an end. Why do you deny this?

Vasishta: Who is it that establishes the beginning and an end to the dream world? It is clearly the person who is in the wakeful state. But the wakeful state is a part of the sleep state called ignorance. We are now discussing the condition of the individual who has crossed ignorance. There is no reality for deep sleep and wakefulness from his stance. Hence they cannot be the limiting end points for the dream world. In the same way from his position no beginning or end point can exist for the wakeful world.

As already enunciated by Kundadanta, there is, in fact, no difference between Brahman and ignorance. Ignorance is similar to your sleep for the Supreme Brahman. Sleep is not different from you. So also ignorance is not different from Brahman. Ignorance has the power of veiling and projecting from the stand point of an ignorant person. Projecting power produces the mind. The mind then becomes the limiting adjunct to the Supreme Brahman.

Examine closely your dream state. There is an entity claiming to be the "I". He is one of the creatures in the dream. He has a mind of his own. He has a body. But what or who constitutes all these? It is none other than "you". But you call him to be an individual (*jīva*) based on the consciousness part of him. You call his subtle limiting adjunct as mind and the gross liming adjunct as the body. Depending on his other attributes, you christen him in the dream as God, demon, man etc. But in truth, all those forms are you, yourself! It is your mind that engenders so many forms. It is your mind again that wakes you up and frees you from these forms!

Similarly, the wakeful state mind produced by ignorance shows the wakeful state world and the multitude of beings in it. Once again it will be the mind only that receives the Knowledge of Truth, purges itself of the sleep called ignorance, eliminates the dreamlike wakeful world and grants you Nirvana. No, 'grant' is an incorrect word. That itself is Nirvana.

Rama: Revered Teacher! What are the dimensions of the mind when it appears? How long does the world survive in it?

Vasishta: It is not possible to define the dimensions of the mind. It can assume any size from that of an atom to that of wide outer space. Therefore, the Vedas declare:

वालाग्रशतभागस्य शतधा कल्पितस्य च ।
भागो जीवः स विज्ञेयः स चानन्त्याय कल्पते ॥ ९॥

vālāgraśatabhāgasya śatadhā kalpitasya ca |
bhāgo jīvaḥ sa vijñeyaḥ sa cānantyāya kalpate || 9||

Shwetaswataropanishad 5-9

(Meaning: If you make a hundred parts of the tip of a thin strand of hair, and make a hundred parts of that one part again, that will be the size of a *jīva*. But he can be of infinite size too).

The world will appear in the mind as long as ignorance persists.

Anything perceived in the world, whether it is a dream, a boon, or a curse is a form of the Supreme Brahman because what the mind shows is only an illusory appearance. There is, in fact, no difference between those multiple objects and Brahman. The difference is as much as that which exists between a water drop and a puddle, a pond, a river or an ocean.

Rama: Sir, I have a small doubt here. Sometimes we see an effect arising out of the boons or curses. For example King Nahusha was turned into a serpent by the curse of the Seven Sages. How did the serpent generate? We do not see any material cause like an egg behind it. How does such an effect take place ?

Vasishta: Rama! We established that the world was nothing but the brilliance of the Pure Consciousness-Space. The Vedas discussed the sudden appearance of the world in Consciousness-Space and described it in statements like "*Sah akāmayata*", "*tadaikśata*" etc. They called it the desire of Hiranyagarbha, will, good thoughts, observation etc. Whatever is conceived in those thoughts takes place. Is there any material cause there? Embedded within those concepts is an idea that the boons, curses etc. of some of the people should get fulfilled. The boons and curses given by the Self-Knowing people, accomplished meditators and such others fructify accordingly. Hence they do not need any specific material cause.

That is the reason why I said that the boons, curses etc. are also a form of Pure Consciousness. If you follow this logic, it is a waste of time to categorize things as inert and conscious or to talk of creation and dissolution. No such differences will be visible if one understands the Truth wholly and completely.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 186.

Sage Vasishta begins to wind up his sermon after The Story of Kundadanta. So he devotes four Sargas (186 to 189, both included) for a brief review of his theory. He talks about the inexorable Law of nature (*niyati*) in this sum up and declares the law to be another form of the Supreme Brahman. He holds that the Supreme Brahman forgets Its true form and assumes the form of a world.

He adds that the world lacks true beingness for this reason. The origination and dissolution of the world are mere imagination, he avers. When the subtle illusion becomes dense, it will take the appearance of the world. He declares at the end:

भ्रान्तिरेवेदमखिलं ब्रह्मैवाभातमेव वा ।।

bhrāntirevedamakhilaṃ brahmaivābhātameva vā ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 189, Sloka 20

(Meaning: The entire world is a phantasm. Or the Supreme Brahman radiates as the world and its creatures).

The Sage established unequivocally that mentation is bondage and realization of the True Original form is liberation. He emphasizes the point in the first sloka of the 190th Sarga with the following words:

ज्ञानस्य ज्ञेयतापत्तिर्बन्ध इत्यभिधीयते ।
तस्यैव ज्ञेयताशान्तिर्मोक्ष इत्यभिधीयते ।।

jñānasya jñeyatāpattirbandha ityabhidhīyate |
tasyaiva jñeyatāśāntirmokṣa ityabhidhīyate ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 190, Sloka 1

(Meaning: It is bondage if Knowledge becomes the knowable. Liberation is attenuation of knowability.)

Rama inferred from this that Sage Vasishta desired to express once again the issues in clear cut and unambiguous terms for the benefit of the rest of the participants in the Assembly. Rama enlivens the discourse with appropriate interventions through very precise and simple questions. The ensuing Question and Answer session is presented by Sage Valmiki in 89 verses, one sloka devoted to a question and the next one for the answer.

The Question-Answer session is highly illuminating and contains the heart of Advaita teaching. It resolves many doubts and uncertainties of a seeker. It also contains refutation of contradicting viewpoints. Hence we shall take them up in detail.]

70. Essence of Advaita — A Question- Answer Session

Rama: Revered Master! How can the knowability attributed to the Knowledge be attenuated? The thought, “I am bound”, is very strongly entrenched within us. How do we reverse it?

Vasishta: The inanity of the mind responsible for such an illusion will fade away from a study of Self-Knowledge. The formless, eternal and tranquil liberation can be achieved by proceeding on the Sevenfold Knowledge Path.

Rama: If a substance has several components and attributes within it, then a detailed study of those parts and properties may gradually add up to a complete knowledge about the substance. But what you are talking about here is about a substance that is indivisible and without any attributes whatsoever. That is the Consciousness-Knowledge. Does the word 'complete' ever be applicable to a description of such Knowledge?

Vasishta: True Knowledge cannot 'be a known'. Nor is it possible to teach anything about Pure and Absolute Knowledge. Hence once the misapprehension owing to ignorance is eliminated, whatever remains at the end is called Perfect Knowledge.

Rama: What would then happen to the separate knowable component of Knowledge that was within the Knowledge? Moreover when you use the word 'Knowledge', does it imply the 'concept of knowing' or 'a means to know' i.e. 'something causal to the act of knowing'?

Vasishta: 'Knowledge' implies the process of knowing. With respect to this type of 'Knowledge', there is no difference between what is 'to be known' and 'Knowledge'. They are like the movement and wind.

Rama: If that were to be the case, the imaginary difference between what is 'to be known' and 'Knowledge' has to be something like the horn of a hare – an impossibility to occur. A thing that is impossible to exist cannot be instrumental in getting any work done. But we find in the world that all works in the past, present and future get executed by the difference between 'what is known' and the 'Knowledge'.

Vasishta: You seem to opine that a non-existent thing can never be seen and it cannot be a cause for happiness or sorrow. But are you not able to see a dream though it does not exist? Don't you experience happiness and sorrow in a dream?

So the beingness or otherwise of a thing cannot be decided based on the criterion whether it appears or not. The decisive criterion cannot also be the thing's ability to cause happiness or sorrow. The real principle will have to be whether the thing can be sublated or not. If a thing cannot be sublated, we have to accept that it truly exists. If it can be sublated, it lacks existence even though it has an appearance. Sublation refers to the elimination of a thing along with its cause as, for example, the snake in the rope.

Examined from this stand, if you find a thing to be separate from you and is external to you, it has to be an illusion only. There is no possibility for the existence of a substance within you and to be separate from you. Hence there is no question of any separate substance being present either inside you or outside you. Therefore, there is no scope for any transactions happening.

Rama: How can this be acceptable, Sir ? You, me, the five fundamental elements, the world around us are all directly seen by us. How are we to deny their existence completely?

Vasishta: Rama, you are attempting to establish the true 'beingness' or otherwise of a substance based on the things in this creation and by an analysis of their cause-effect relationships. For example, you think that a pot is made out of a real lump of clay. Hence the pot, you seem to conclude, has also to be real. The approach adopted by you is okay. But then dig deeper. Go back to the very beginning of creation.

What was there prior to creation? There were neither any substances nor any tools. There was only an illusion. Hence the Macrocosm (Virat Purusha) born at the beginning of creation, the five fundamental elements etc. have got to be illusory. Therefore, the substances that appear to us have also to be illusory. It follows from this that the world and the transactions that go on within it are unreal, though we have a direct perception of them.

Rama: The world is so clearly seen by us every day. The past, future and the present time periods are going on all the time in it. You pronounce this entire experiential world has not originated at all because it is negated by acquiring the Knowledge of Truth. How can you say so?

Vasishta: What else can be done? The dream worlds, mirages, appearance of double moons, daydreams, castles in the air, skeins of hair in space and so on are also experienced by us in the past, future and in the present. But their reality gets contradicted as soon as the truth about them is known. Is this also not a fact of our common experience? I put it to you, therefore, that you, me, the transactions in the world etc. are all a fantasy.

Rama: The differentiation of you-me, that-this and so on has been present since the very beginning of creation. The happiness and sorrow have also been experienced ever since. On what grounds do we proclaim them to have not originated?

Vasishta: Using the very same logic that you have enunciated! You see, there cannot be an effect without a cause. Agreed? There was nothing else that could cause re-creation of the world once the world got obliterated in a Great Dissolution. But it seems to have been created even in the absence of a cause. Using this logic we hold that the world was not born and that the seeming world is sublated on obtaining True knowledge.

Rama: Even if everything is annihilated in the Great Dissolution, the unborn and immutable substance, the Supreme Brahman, remains. Why can't we say that Brahman is the cause for the next creation?

Vasishta: Only that particular effect which is latent within a cause can be born out of that cause. For example you cannot get a cloth out of a pot. There are no internal parts within the unborn and immutable Brahman you are speaking about. How can the world originate in Brahman?

Rama: One may postulate, following the Sankhyans, that the world exists within the Supreme Brahman compacted into a fine form at the time of Great Dissolution and it re-emerges at the time of creation again ?

Vasishta: What evidence do we have to make such a claim ? Is there an eye witness to vouchsafe that the world existed in a fine compacted form within the Supreme Brahman at the time of Great Dissolution? The answer is in the negative for both these questions.

The evidence from Vedas is in dire contrast to your contention. The scriptures repeatedly emphasize that the Supreme Brahman is Consciousness alone and that there are no parts within It.

Rama: We'll concede that the world does not exist in its illusory form at the time of the Great Dissolution. We say that it existed as Knowledge and it originated from that Knowledge again. Thus we contend that the cause for the origin of the world is the Supreme Brahman.

What is wrong with the above idea? I am pursuing such an argument because non-existing illusion can never obtain beingness.

Vasishta: What you say will amount to equating knowledge and the world. How can the world be then subjected to creation and dissolution? After all, Pure Knowledge cannot be subjected to creation and dissolution!

Rama: Let us be clear on one thing. The creation was not there to start with. It came about later on. You say that illusion is the reason for it. What is the reason for the illusion?

Vasishta: The question is based on an unsupported assumption on your part! You presume that the cause-effect relationship is valid and real. But causal relationships have no reality. Why do they lack reality? Because never is there a real cause or a real effect.

What is perceived (**चेत्य** *cetya*), who perceives (**चित्** *cit*) and perception (**चैतन्य** *caitanya*) are different forms of your Consciousness-Self.

Rama: If what you propose is correct, this purely inert and mechanical gross body becomes the knower (**चित्** *cit*). If so, Ishvar, the source for all Knowledge will be inert. It is like saying that the log ignites the fire and the fire is being burnt down by the wood!

Vasishta: No, that's not what I said! 'The seer' can never be 'the seen.' The subject can never become the object. But the most subtle and salient point is that there is no object, 'the seen' at all. The seer who is Pure Consciousness appears as though It takes the form of the triad – the knower, the known and the knowledge.

Rama: There got to be at the very beginning of the creation someone or other who was the very first knower of the creation. There cannot be something 'known' in the absence of a 'knower.' What existed prior to creation was Pure Consciousness alone. Hence we are forced to admit that It was the first Knower of the first created things. How was that first 'known' substance generated?

Vasishta: Rama! If at all we said that there was a 'seen' or 'known' substance produced at the beginning of creation, you may legitimately question us about its origin. But that has never been our argument. We are consistent in our assertion that there has been no legitimate cause behind anything 'seen' at the beginning of creation or even later on at any time. Hence there is no thing 'seen.' Because there has been nothing seen, Consciousness is forever without bondage. Consciousness cannot be captured in words.

Rama: That being so, how was the 'thought wave', "I", born? How did the knowledge, "I see the world" originate? How does one have the feeling, "I am alive"?

Vasishta: You see, there was no cause for the creation even at the very start. So nothing ever is really born. The entire creation is only an illusion. Therefore, what you see is merely an illusion.

Rama: According to you then, what exists is the Supreme Brahman only. It cannot be expressed in words. It does not contain Knowledge. It has no thing 'known.' It is eternal, self-effulgent and unblemished. To whom does this illusion happen then? Of what nature is the illusion?

Vasishta: There is no reason behind the illusion! Hence there is no illusion at all! 'You, me and everything' are all the superbly serene Supreme Brahman only!

Rama: Revered Teacher! I am awfully confused! I am unable to even formulate my questions. Obviously I am not fully enlightened. What misgivings can I place before you?

Vasishta: Rama! You are still going by an attempt to establish a sequence of cause-effect relationships. There has to be a touchstone which can establish the correctness or otherwise of the sequence of causes and effects. If we examine based on that yardstick, the causes will evaporate. For example, a doubt is the cause for a question. The cause for the doubt is ignorance. If we can get rid of the ignorance, there is no scope for doubt and the later questions. So go on, shoot your questions. When all the questions are resolved, you will automatically land in and be at ease as the Supreme Consciousness.

Rama: Revered Teacher! As per your teaching, there is no cause for creation and hence there is no creation. I could understand that. To whom did the imaginary division of a knower and the known occur? How did it occur?

Vasishta: Rama, you have an intellectual understanding of the matter. But the understanding is not fully rooted in you for lack of practice. That is the reason a non-existing illusion has ensnared you.

Rama: Sir, rephrasing myself then, why is there an absence of practice? How does the practice take place? Further the so called practice is also an illusion. Where has it come from ?

Vasishta: You asked the question under the assumption that you were ignorant and that state of ignorance was 'real.' Let us say that your assumption is correct. But simply because you thought that you were ignorant, the Infiniteness of the Supreme Brahman will not be compromised. Therefore, even your thoughts on practice are a form of that Supreme Consciousness. Hence your question does not have any validity.

Rama: The illusion of the world is eliminated for *jīvanmuktas* like you. Even then you think of instructing people like us. You use words for that purpose. You also admit something has to be instructed and there is someone to be instructed. How do all such things happen?

Vasishta: The whole process of instructing etc. is also Brahman. The disciple, teacher and instruction are all Brahman. There is neither bondage nor liberation in the eyes of an enlightened man.

Rama: You are establishing that illusion of a world is an impossibility taking recourse to logic. Granting that, wherefrom the ignoramus in the world acquire the knowledge of differentiating space, time, action, matter etc. etc.? How could these different things gain a reality?

Vasishta: It was because of ignorance only. There is no other reality than ignorance before obtaining enlightenment (*jīvanmukti*).

Rama: There is no duality or Oneness in the *jīvanmukti* that you refer to. In other words, the idea of someone being taught or someone teaching does not arise. Does the instruction (teaching), taught by a teacher who lacks the 'quality of teaching' in him, contain any 'value as a teaching'? Can such an instruction lacking the 'value as a teaching' within it lead to Nirvana?

Vasishta: A separate individual (*jīva*) is the Supreme Brahman not aware of Himself. The individual realizes that he is Brahman on the Awareness of being Brahman. So it is Brahman, who is under ignorance. It is He who receives the instruction in this process. Because the instruction is being received by Him, it is a teaching. Thus the instruction becomes one with what is taught and through that it becomes one with the Supreme Brahman. Hence you cannot state that the instruction lacks the 'value as a teaching' in it. This whole scenario is applicable only in the case of ignorant people. In the case of enlightened people like us, as you said, an instruction cannot have the 'value as a teaching.'

Rama: You used the expression, "enlightened people like us." It does show that words like "I", "we" have significance for them also. Implicitly it means that they too have the "I"-thought within them. The only difference is that one cannot say that this "I"-thought is generated in them out of ignorance because they are completely free of ignorance. In that case we have to agree that the Knowledge in them has become the "I"-thought. Then we have to admit that the teaching is different from the "I"-thought. But "I"-thought and the individual (*jīva)* are the same. How could such a *jīva* enter you who are totally Consciousness-Self?

Vasishta: Wind is movement. Movement is wind. In the same way, in the case of Jivanmuktas, the Knowledge itself is "I"-thought. This "I"-thought and the "I"-thought under ignorance are different. The "I"-thought of the ignorant people is based on the attachment to the body, senses etc.

Rama: So the world of a *jīvanmukta* is Consciousness as shown by the maxim, 'the turbulent wave is also the placid ocean.' It means that the person to be taught, the Guru who teaches and the teaching and other similar triads are all Consciousness.

Vasishta: You asked me a little earlier a question about the presence of the 'value as a teaching' in the instruction of a *jīvanmukta*. You contended that a *jīvanmukta* lacks within him both the sense of duality and oneness and hence you said that he would not have the sense of separation of a teacher being here and a disciple over there. Hence you doubted whether the 'value as a teaching' will be present in his instruction.

From what you say now, that question loses its locus. Do not visualize an ocean and a wave to be two separate things. What is, is One only! It is Infinite, Serene, Perfect and the most Supreme! That is Pure Non-duality. Get a hold on It.

Rama: You said that Pure Knowledge and "I"-thought were like wind and movement in the case of *jīvanmuktas* like you. If Pure Non-duality is firmed up, who is it that thinks differently – sometimes as Pure Knowledge and at other times as "I"-thought?

Who is one that experiences this "I"-thought? There has obviously to be someone to do these things. If such thoughts of differentiation are unavoidable to *jīvanmuktas*, what can we speak of the ordinary folk ? Therefore, it looks like an illusion of distinction is inevitable for anyone. It follows that the illusion of a world is also inescapable. It would mean that we are necessarily trapped in the cycle of bondage and liberation. What then is the advantage of Pure Non-duality?

Vasishta: Bondage comes only if one takes what is perceived to be true. Knowers of Truth will not do that. From their stance, it is Pure Knowledge appearing in different forms. Hence they are unconcerned with bondage and liberation.

Rama: A black object appears black and a white object appears white in the light of a lamp. But the lamp itself does not become the black or white object. Likewise, if various substances are seen because of Pure Knowledge, we have to say that those substances are really there and hence are seen. So the reality of the objects is established by the instrument of Knowledge. This is our common experience. But you postulate that all things get annihilated along with their cause by Knowledge. How do you justify it?

Vasishta: We had already demonstrated by adopting different approaches that the objects of the world lacked beingness. We said that there was no cause behind them and hence they did not have beingness. If such non-existent things are seen, that appearance has to be like the silver in nacre. Such an appearance will last as long as the illusion lasts. It cannot survive beyond that. Knowers of Truth do not suffer from the illusion. Hence they do not see anything to be external to them.

Rama: Let us for the present leave the issue whether the silver in nacre or the dream world etc. are real or unreal. Misery does come out of them. Even the illusory world brings suffering. What is the way to avoid sorrow ?

Vasishta: The misery being experienced in a dream will vanish when you wake up. Similarly, the sorrow of the world will go away with Self-realization. This is the only method to get rid of worldly unhappiness.

Rama: We do not achieve much by equating the dream and wakeful worlds. How do the objects appearing in dreams or the wakeful world lose their form?

Vasishta: When you analyze the pros and cons of the dream world after you wake up, you will easily see that even the hardest rocks and mountains in a dream have after all no reality. Likewise if you investigate in depth from a position of the Knowledge of Truth, you will let go of the notion that the worldly objects are real.

Rama: What does a *jīvanmukta* who achieved subtle discretion through such an in depth inquiry see? How does he escape the illusory world?

Vasishta: The world appears as if it was not there at all to a *jīvanmukta* in whom the past innate tendencies are annihilated. The world appears like a hut in ruins or like a castle in the air or like a fading water color painting on the wall.

Rama: What sort of experience does a *jīvanmukta* with attenuated impressions get?

Vasishta: He will gradually obtain the higher stages on the Path of Knowledge. He will later shed even the remnant impressions and finally achieve Nirvana.

Rama: The innate tendencies are an accretion from innumerable past births. How do they get erased in this birth?

Vasishta: When once you realize the truth of what is, the visible world which has originated in a fantasy will linger like a burnt out seed. From then on, as the current suffrage (*prārabdha*) gets expended, even the minimal appearance of the world will fade away.

Rama: After a *jīvanmukta* stops perceiving the visible objects as gross things, what steps does he have to take so that the world does not get projected again ? How does he gain permanent peace?

Vasishta: His mind transforms to Self. Hence he does not have to struggle to control the mind. He will have no desire to experience things. He doesn't need to do anything anymore.

Rama: Though one knows that the world is as empty as the thoughts of an infant, desire for experiencing worldly objects does not seem to wane. Even a baby cries if its pet things are broken. That being the state of the world, how is one to get rid of the temptation?

Vasishta: Once you know for sure that the thing you are running after is a product of fantasy, you will not regret its loss. Hence you should first make an effort to develop proper care in discerning unambiguously an imaginary object from the true thing. With that you will automatically lose interest in experiencing worldly objects and will eventually attain peace.

Rama: The illusion is produced by the mind. So we have to understand the mind if we have to understand the illusion. What should we do to know the mind?

Vasishta:

चितश्चेत्योन्मुखत्वं यत्तच्चित्तमिति कथ्यते ।

citaścetyonmukhatvaṃ yattaccittamiti kathyate |

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 190, Sloka 67

(Meaning: Mind is the name of Consciousness (*chit*) when It has a propensity to be as an object (*chetya*)).

You have to inquire in depth in order to experientially understand this.Listening to my instruction is itself an inquiry. The past impressions will be weakened by the teaching.

Rama: Mind is not exterminated even by rigorous efforts through Yoga. Past impressions are not extinguished as long as there is an active mind. In order to achieve eternal Nirvana, the mind has to be annulled. How does this transformation take place?

Vasishta: The fact of matter is there are no perceivables. Once this is realized, what does the mind hang on to? If there is nothing to grasp, the mind itself falls off. In other words, one has to wipe out the percepts. That means you have to arrive at a state where no 'thing' is seen. This is the only method to achieve a null-mind.

Rama: How do you deny what is being experienced ? How do you brush it away?

Vasishta: Look, what is it that is being experienced? What is being experienced by the ignorant is different from what is experienced by the Knowers of Truth. There is no 'beingness' in the objects experienced by the ignoramus. There is no name or form to what is experienced by the Knowers of Truth. It is ineffable. It is Non-dual.

Rama: What is the quality of the world seen by the ignorant? Why is it not true? What is the quality of the world visible to the Knowers of Truth? And why can't we express it in words?

Vasishta: The world that appears to the ignorant has a beginning and an end. It has an origin and a dissolution (birth and death). The world of the Knowers of Truth does not have such endpoints. Because the world has never originated in their view, it has not been there at all ! Hence it is inaccessible for words.

Rama: How does something that is not born at all come into one's experience?

Vasishta: Just like the dreams !

Rama: The experience in dreams or daydreaming is caused by the impressions acquired from the interactions with things in the wakeful world.

Vasishta: Do you experience the same object during dreaming as you do in the wakeful state? Or is it a different one?

Rama: It is the same thing as in the wakeful state but in the form of impressions.

Vasishta: Suppose a person saw his house collapse in his dream. If we go by what you say, his wakeful state house too should be in a collapsed condition. Does it ?

Rama: That is true. We cannot hold that both are the same! The dream house is different from the wakeful state house. Perhaps you intend to say that even the dream house is another manifestation of the Supreme Brahman. Why then should that Brahman appear in the form of a different world now?

Vasishta: There is no rule to say that what you have experienced now in the wakeful state has to appear in the dream state. Things that were experienced as well as things that were not experienced in the wakeful state may appear in the dreams. Sometimes things that were once experienced may appear as totally new in dreams. These strange things happen depending upon the sum total of experiences of that individual from the beginning of creation till now. Because of those experiences, the Supreme Brahman appears now as another world. It all depends on his habits.

Rama: I surmise from this discussion that the world comes into being in the same way as the dreams do for one who does not abide as the Supreme Brahman. But the world possesses us like a devil. How do we exorcize it?

Vasishta: Inquire into the reason for the appearance of the dream which is called wakefulness. Understand that the effect is not different from the cause. This is the only technique for you to follow.

Rama: I wrongly said a while ago that the wakeful state objects are the reason for the dream world. The real reason for them is the mind. Hence the mind is the cause for the wakeful state objects.

Vasishta: We have already seen that mind is none other than Consciousness tending to be the percept. So the world in truth is none other than Consciousness.

Rama: The non- difference between Brahman and the world is comparable then to the non-difference between a tree and its branch. Why should we hold that the world does not have beingness at all? This is also called 'difference in non-difference.' If all the worlds join together, it becomes the collective mind. You may say that the collective mind is equivalent to the Supreme Brahman. The individual worlds and the individual minds will be its branches.

Vasishta: No, such a proposition does not hold water. First of all, the world does not have a cause behind it. You cannot attribute beingness to it. Hence the world is not created at all! What seemingly appears as the world is the immortal, ageless Supreme Brahman. There is no point in conceptualizing parts as stem, branch etc. within something that was never born.

Rama: Yes, Teacher! What you say is very true. The originations and dissolutions, perceiving and experiencing etc. are mere illusions like the Doctrine of Spurious Correlations based on The Crow and the Palm Fruit Metaphor.

71. The Three Viewpoints

Vasishta: Rama!

या व्यापारवती रसाद्रसविदां काचित्कवीनां नवा
दृष्टिर्या परिनिष्ठितार्थविषयोन्मेषा च वैपश्चिती ।
ते द्वे अप्यवलम्ब्य विश्वमखिलं निर्वर्णितं निर्वृतं
यावद्दृष्टिदृशो न सन्ति कलिता नौ शून्यता नो भ्रमः।।

yā vyāpāravatī rasādrasavidāṃ kācitkavīnāṃ navā
dṛṣṭiryā pariniṣṭhitārthaviṣayonmeṣā ca vaipaścitī |
te dve apyavalambya viśvamakhilaṃ nirvarṇitaṃ nirvṛtaṃ
yāvaddṛṣṭidṛśo na santi kalitā nau śūnyatā no bhramaḥ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 190, Sloka 89
(Meaning: There are three Points of View – the Empirical viewpoint, the

Logical viewpoint and the Absolute viewpoint. Each one is stronger than the other. I presented an exegesis on the origin of the world from the Logical and Absolute viewpoints. The Logical viewpoint is based on robust rational principles of inquiry. Expert Logicians qualified to examine what is perceived through proper means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) value it very highly. The Absolute viewpoint is respected by the *jīvanmuktas* who have an immediate direct realization of the Supreme Truth by following the triumvirate of Listening, Reflection and Contemplative Meditation (*Shravana, Manana* and *nididhyāsa*).

Adopting these two viewpoints, I explicated the genesis of the world right up to the Supreme Brahman where none of these three viewpoints or the individuals entertaining those viewpoints exist. Even void is absent there and It is free of phantasm).

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 190.]

Rama: You have put it very aptly, Gurudev! The world is an illusion when viewed from a logical perspective. From the stance of Self-Knowledge, it is the Beingness of Brahman!

Vasishta: True Indeed! The Supreme Brahman becomes an individual, conducts an inquiry and learns that He Himself is Brahman as well as this world!

Rama: And that is the surprise! Prior to the creation and after the dissolution and later during the state of liberation, the Supreme Brahman shines as One. No quarters (directions) exist at any of those times. What lamp can illuminate that?

Vasishta: Yes, yes! It is quite a mystery! Vedas also admit as much.

[**Note:** The following two examples are added by The Commentator, Shri ABS:

विभुम् चिदानन्दमरूपमद्भुतम् *vibhum cidānandamarūpamadbhutam*

(Meaning: The Supreme-Self is all pervading; It is Consciousness and Bliss. There is no form exceeding It. It is quite astounding).

The same thing is expressed in Puranas as follows:

आश्चर्यवत्पश्यति कश्चिदेन - माश्चर्यवद्वदति तथैव चान्यः ।
आश्चर्यवच्चैनमन्यः शृणोति श्रुत्वाप्येनं वेद न चैव कश्चित् ॥२९॥

āścaryavatpaśyati kaścidena - māścaryavadvadati tathaiva cānyaḥ |
āścaryavaccainamanyaḥ śṛṇoti śrutvāpyenaṃ veda na caiva kaścit ||29||
Bhagavadgita 2-29

(Meaning: Some look at it with astonishment. Those who speak of it also say the same. Those who hear also listen in wonder. However much one may listen to, It cannot be grasped).]

Rama, the illumination of Consciousness you are speaking about is not like the light of the Sun and other stars that you see every day. It is a lamp that illuminates all. It is the Light of the light.

Consciousness is the witness during the dream state. It is also the objects seen in the dream as well as the act of seeing. All the three are One. This is the common experience familiar to every person. Even then, he is unable to accept when we say that the same one Consciousness appears in the form of a triad – the seer, seen and the act of seeing — during the wakeful state also. He is surprised when we explain in detail. Only the ignorant feel this as a surprise but not the Knowers of Truth.

You wondered how Consciousness would have shone when there were no quarters (directions) at the beginning of the creation. Whether it is the beginning of creation, or during dissolution or in liberation, the objects that are illuminated will be non-existent but not the Illuminator Himself! That condition is unlike any of the wakeful, dream or deep sleep states. The lamp of Consciousness that remains then is called Turiya.

Rama! Achieve that Turiya! Ascending on the steps of the Knowledge Path, abide firmly in It and be silent like a statue! Be in Nirvikalpa Samadhi! Ignore the evil minded people who talk contrary to this.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 191.]

Rama: Revered Teacher!

बुद्धे यावदियं नाम जगद्भ्रान्तिर्न किंचन ।
न चाभून्न च वास्तीयं न च नाम भविष्यति ।।

buddhe yāvadiyaṃ nāma jagadbhrāntirna kiṃcana |
na cābhūnna ca vāstīyaṃ na ca nāma bhaviṣyati ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 192, Sloka 2

(Meaning: If one understands the Truth as propounded by you, there is no illusory world. It was not there in the past. It is not there now and it will not be there in the future).

[**Note:** We may mention here that Shri Sureswara Achraya describes the same point very beautifully in his work of Brihadaranya vartika.

तत्वमस्यादि वाक्योत्थ सम्यघी जन्म मात्रतः
अविद्यासह कार्येण नासिदस्ति भविष्यति

tatvamasyādi vākyottha samyaghī janma mātrataḥ
avidyāsaha kāryeṇa nāsidasti bhaviṣyati
Brihadaranya vartika 1-1-183

(Meaning: It is enough for one to attain complete Knowledge through the

Great Statements like *tat tvam asi* of the Vedas. Ignorance evaporates along with its effect. Ignorance was not there, is not here and will not be).

Coming back to Yoga Vasishta:

Rama told Sage Vasishta that his doubts had all been cleared. He recited the gist of the entire teaching as a proof of his learning. Sage Valmiki devoted three Sargas to the recapitulation. The first Sarga contains Rama's description of the visible world as nothing but Consciousness-Self. In the second Sarga he declared that there was no duality in the world.

नाविद्यास्ति ह न भ्रान्तिर्न दुःखं न सुखोदयः ।
विद्याऽविद्या सुखं दुःखमिति ब्रह्मैव निर्मलम् ।।

nāvidyāsti ha na bhrāntirna duḥkhaṃ na sukhodayaḥ |
vidyā'vidyā sukhaṃ duḥkhamiti brahmaiva nirmalam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 193, Sloka 10

(Meaning: There is no ignorance. No illusion. No happiness nor sorrow.Knowledge, ignorance, happiness and sorrow are all forms of Brahman).

In the next Sarga, Rama said that though each individual created a separate universe for himself within the very fine subatomic Consciousness, no collisions of the worlds would take place. The chain of creations would go on as layers over layers of superimpositions. He said that the visible worlds did not have any beingness beyond that of the substrate Pure Consciousness. The trinity of Gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Ishvar would enjoy this beingness only, he declared. He announced that whatever had to be obtained by him was attained and that there was nothing further to do.

Sage Vasishta was immensely pleased with Rama's understanding. He added that the instructions given by him were not just theoretical pedagogy and that he was speaking from his own experience. He said that Brahma, Vishnu and Ishvar also were in the state beyond functioning and non-functioning. He encouraged Rama to remain in such a state. Rama said in response that he witnessed the world like a mountain seen in a dream.

In spite of all this, Sage Vasishta, being a strict teacher that he was, subjected Rama to a further test by posing several questions to him. The questions by the Sage and Rama's answers commence with the 11th sloka in the 195th Sarga and go on till the end. These questions and answers were not structured the way the 190th Sarga was done with each sloka exclusively devoted to a question or answer. There were mainly two questions asked by Sage Vasishta. Rama's reply is given in about 60 verses.

We shall now take up the questions and Rama's extended answer to them.]

72. Assessment Of The Student

Vasishta: The world is experienced every day right before us. How does one call it a fallacious reflection? How is it said to be non-existent?

Rama: Sir, no effect takes place without a cause. There are only two ways by which an effect is born – one is Transformation; and the other is Changeless change.

Let us assume that there is a fundamental substance causal for the world. It has to have either some components within it or no components. If it has components within it, there is a possibility for it to be transformed into the world. But in the process of a transformation, the causal substance does not survive once the effect is born. When an idol is prepared chiseling away a block of wood, the block of wood cannot retain its original shape anymore. In the same way, we have to consider the root causal substance to have been destroyed with the emergence of the world.

If that is so, the fundamental substance would fall into the class of perishables. It would become a part of the world. But a part of the world cannot be its own fundamental root cause. That is impossible. Hence, we have to conclude that the root causal substance does not contain components in it. Granting that the root causal substance is indivisible, the world must emerge from it through the process of changeless-change. If this is accepted, we have to admit that the world is a reflection (a virtual image) and therefore, an illusion.

Thus there is no option other than admitting that the world is an imagination in spite of the fact that it is directly experienced every day.

The root causal substance for the emergence of the world is Brahman. The question now is whether Brahman is inert or conscious. The conscious entity "I" cannot arise out of an inert object. Hence Brahman has got to be conscious; It cannot be inert.

The fundamental substance which is conscious goes through a changeless-change for fractions of a second and appears to itself as if it has a subtle form. The first changeless-changed form is called Hiranyagarbha. Hirnayagarbha within that fraction of a second witnesses a period of time which is the lifespan of the four-faced Brahma. This time period is poetically described as the combination of two infinites (*dviparārtha*).

Vasishta: How is that possible? How can one believe that?

Rama: You have to believe this based on the analogy of your dream. It is in our experience that within the short duration of a few minutes of the dream, we witness stories that go on for a lifetime.

The real situation is that the first imaginary individual in this imaginary world was Hirnyagarbha. The creation done by him also is imaginary. There is no more to it!

Vasishta: You keep harping on ‘imagination.’ Is it not then your idea that the ‘quality of imagination’ is something related to this world? When the world does not exist in reality, how can the attribute ‘imaginary’ be applicable to it?

Rama: You seem to take a confrontational position. If you get into arguments, we have to say that the final Truth is not expressible in words. Hence we resort to the application of different models to explain it. From the viewpoint of the Absolute Truth, we may say that the world is real. From the point of superimposition, we may describe it as an illusion. Because illusion lacks a locus, we may say that the world is neither real nor unreal. As we cannot be definitive, we can even say that the world is indefinable.The different ways of expression as above are due to the difference in the perspectives adopted in understanding the fundamental causal substance. A genuine Knower of Truth abandons the external viewpoint and abides himself in the ultimate Self-Realization and stays peaceful.

Vasishta: That is not my point! It is said that a huge banyan tree lies within a small seed. On the same analogy, why can’t we say that the world stays in a compact form embedded within the Supreme Brahman? Then it will be easy to establish that the world is real.

Rama: We have to first assess how far it is true that the tree stays embedded within a seed. It is nobody's case that the tree stays as a dwarfed version of itself inside a seed. We have to postulate that it is stored in the form of some subtle atoms. The subtle atoms of the seed will be part and parcel of the seed.

A seed is the whole of its parts. Then where is the space left for the tree? Hence we cannot hold that the tree is embedded within the seed.

Even if we accept for argument’s sake that the tree is present inside the seed, we cannot extend this analogy of the tree and seed to the world and Brahman. The tree which is in the subtle form of atoms inside the seed becomes a tree only after it is mixed with water molecules and soil particles. We do not have any evidence to say that some other things also exist within the Supreme Brahman. Even if we assume some other substances were there within Brahman, it is not possible to have some particles like water which are different both from Brahman and the tree. Hence the seed-tree analogy is not applicable here.

Vasishta: Why can’t we take the position that the world is preserved in a subtle form within the Brahman at the time of the Great Dissolution ?

Rama: We have already demonstrated that the Supreme Brahman cannot have different parts within It. A thing like a world with various divisions and a constant change cannot originate from an undivided immutable Brahman. It is not also possible for something with a form to be born out of a formless thing. Because we have established that Brahman is formless and does not have components within It, something with a form and divisions in it, however subtle it may be, cannot be intermixed with It.

Vasishta: Supposing we use the dream analogy. The impressions stored in our mind assume shapes temporarily and appear as a dream. We can argue that the world is a form of transitory knowledge on similar grounds.

[**Note:** This is the concept of one of the schools of Buddhism.]

Rama: If it were to be so, it amounts to saying that the thoughts during the wakeful state have condensed to a gross form during a dream. The wakeful world thoughts and the objects there are mutually dependent. Hence it would mean that the wakeful state objects have changed to dream objects. Will that not imply that the wakeful state world has changed to the dreamscape?

Vasishta: Let us agree to that! After all, dreams are almost like the wakeful state world.

Rama: Suppose I dream that a person was dead and was cremated. But I find after waking up that he is very much alive and kicking. If both the dream and wakeful worlds are the same, how is it that the person is found alive after I wake up? Hence we have to agree that it is a new and different world in the dream. So the world cannot be said to have taken shape out of momentary knowledge.

Vasishta: Your entire argument is based upon dreams. Let us say that a particular person does not have any dreams at all. Will a world exist in his view?

Rama: Is there anyone in this world who has no dreams at all?

Vasishta: Some experts opine that people like us having gross bodies only get dreams. With the gross body gone, there can be no dreams.

[Note: This is the position of Charvakas.]

Rama: This is not in line with the experience of Yogis. The Yogis say that there are creatures without a physical body. They are the ghosts. They move around in a subtle body constituting five elements. The Yogis affirm that such ghosts also dream. We cannot deny the Yogis' words. Hence this world is like a dream for everyone. It has originated from the Supreme Brahman through the process of changeless-change.

Therefore, I understand that anything and everything visible in the world is a form of the Supreme Brahman. This is my firm conviction.

Four positions are possible with respect to the world:

1. The Ignorant View: Says that the world is real.
2. The Discretionary View: Considers the world as an illusion.
3. The Liberated View: Takes the World as Brahman.
4. View Based on the Stage on the Path of Knowledge : Depends on the stage of the seeker . He will see the world from an initial state of believing it to be real to the ultimate position of taking everything as Brahman, also termed as Space.

Revered Guru! You are in that position of Space. I am also in the same position.

खमहं खं भवांश्चित्खं जगत्खं खं खमेव च ।
चिदाकाशैकतामेत्य भजैकाकाशरूपताम् ।।

khamahaṃ khaṃ bhavāṃścitkhaṃ jagatkhaṃ khaṃ khameva ca |
cidākāśaikatāmetya bhajaikākāśarūpatām ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 195, Sloka 62

(Meaning: I am Space. You are Space. Consciousness is Space. The World is Space. Sky is Space. May you be in the form of Consciousness-Space! One does not have to say Consciousness-Space. Be as Absolute Space!

[**Note:** 'Space' here means Brahman which cannot be expressed by words and does not have any perceptibles within it. It alone is.]

Teacher! You taught us from that position. My salutations to you, the Supreme Brahman! By your grace, I have a clear understanding. There is no Rama. I do not possess any senses. The pot, cloth etc. objects do not exist. There is Space only. That is Consciousness-Space! That is the Supreme Brahman-Space!

Funny though, these words sound like saying "My mother was a barren woman." Such statements receive vehement opposition on a debating platform. But it is not a subject matter to be resolved by arguments. Those who have an experiential understanding can appreciate the meaning of these words. Only they can comprehend the significance.

This condition is beyond the mind and beyond the words. Observing 'Statue like Silence' is prudent in this matter. But unless it is properly elucidated in detail, Truth cannot be known. That looks very odd to me. I really wonder how the Supreme Truth, inaccessible to the mind and words, is made intelligible by scriptural texts. Only you can enlighten us on this point.

73. The Story Of The Lumberjacks

Vasishta: What you say is absolutely true! Scriptures do not cause Self-realization. In fact the scripture establishes that the Supreme Self is not a topic to be taught through concepts using words and sentences.

Rama: What else do the scriptures do if they cannot instruct on the Supreme Self?

Vasishta: It removes the differences between the knower, the known and the means of knowing superimposed by ignorance. That is all that it does.

When once the differences are gone, whatever remains is the True 'You.' Then there is no further need of any other means of Knowledge. I shall illustrate this through an interesting story so that you can appreciate it better. It is the Story of Lumberjacks and Water Carriers. There was once a severe paucity of drinking water in a country. The land was mountainous and was covered by thick vegetation. People had to walk long distances to fetch water. As a result a new vocation of carriers of long dowel rods with water pots hanging at either end sprung up.

In course of time, the position of local water resources improved and the open wells were full of water. Income for the dowel rod carriers was badly affected. They languished in penury. An elderly person sympathized with their plight and advised them to go into the forest, cut wood and sell the logs instead of bemoaning their fate. The dowel carriers liked the idea. They went in groups, fetched the lumber and sold it. Their income improved. They chopped more and more trees. Consequently they had to go farther into the forest. As they explored newer places in the forest, some of them found fruit orchards. Some others located floral plants. Still others located gold deposits and precious stones. The wealth of some of them grew several times depending on what they exploited. Some had to remain content with selling lumber only.

One of the lumberjacks was lucky to find a highly valuable Chintaamani (Wish-fulfilling Gemstone). In one stroke all his desires were satisfied.

Realization of Self through scriptural Knowledge is akin to this. Let me explain the significance of various things in the story. Dowel Rod Carriers are ordinary people. Forests are the Gurus, Scriptures and other Knowledge resources. Vocation is a desire for experiencing comforts.

Everyone gains knowledge with an eye for comfort. Gradually he goes deeper into his knowledge. Depending on his eligibility and luck, he may achieve higher stages on the Path of Knowledge. It will be similar to the lumberjacks finding fruits, flowers, precious stones etc. Some rare person may attain Self-realization like obtaining a Chintaamani!

A point to be noted is that one who pursues knowledge for wealth will obtain both prosperity and liberation.

Expressing the same in pedagogic terms, the scriptures provide instruction mainly in the three human pursuits of righteousness, wealth and desire. They teach about the Supreme Brahman indirectly through *lakshanavritti. lakshanavritti* refers to arriving at the meaning of a word not literally but indicatively in a metaphoric sense. I shall tell you now how it works.

Scriptures are also undoubtedly a part of the illusion. But their study will lead to an improvement in the *sattvic* quality of ignorance. As a result the person gets purified. His thoughts get sanctified. He will be left with pure truth. Thus though the scriptures do not directly bestow Self-Knowledge, they help you in reaching there. Hence we should respect them.

74. Conduct Code in Worldly Transactions For a Spiritual Aspirant

Vasishta: (Continuing) I shall now talk to you on the way a spiritual aspirant conducts himself in the world and also offer you a few tips.

1. It is better to start young like you on the path of inquiry for Truth if one is desirous of achieving discretion.
2. Practice to notice the Consciousness-Self which is present as the substrate in all beings.
3. Observe equanimity towards all irrespective of their defects or virtues.
4. Consider others' happiness as you will your own.
5. Develop the habit of implementing the points at 2. and 3. above together.

This is the true equipoise.

Adopting the above practices meticulously, leads you to following results:

- Love towards all creatures grows along with equipoise.
- The mind attains tremendous peace.
- You will also improve your ability to bear with the pairs of opposites.
- Eventually even sorrow will begin to look like happiness.
- You will acquire the four good qualities of Friendship, Compassion, Happiness and Indifference.
- Finally you will realize the Truth.

[**Note:** The effects can be used by the aspirant as indicative benchmarks for a self-assessment of one's own progress on the Path of Knowledge. The seeker should also cultivate love for all creatures, mental tranquility, forbearance towards polar pairs, treating misery as pleasure, and friendship, compassion, happiness and indifference.]

Equipoise is the most important of all the practices. Emperors Sibi, Janaka, Jadabharata, Dharmaraja and many others achieved the Supreme State adopting equipoise. A man of perfect balance will be as follows:

अभिवाञ्छेन्न मरणमभिवाञ्छेन्न जीवितम् ।
यथाप्राप्तसमाचारो विचरेदविहिंसकः ।।

abhivāñchenna maraṇamabhivāñchenna jīvitam |
yathāprāptasamācāro vicaredavihiṃsakaḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 198, Sloka 43

(Meaning: Does not wish to end life nor desires to live long. Whatever

happens accepts the way it happens and keeps aloof from violence).

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki devoted nearly 30 verses in this Sarga in describing the glory of equipoise.]

Rama: Sir, some people do not renounce action even after they are liberated. Why ?

Vasishta: Essentially there are two reasons for that.

1. They do not possess a sense of renunciation or retention. They will not draw any personal benefit from their perspective either by giving up or accepting the action. But performing good actions may help others.

2. Liberation is normally preceded by a lot of virtuous actions performed over a long period. They keep performing the same type of actions effortlessly.

Many *jīvanmuktas* continue to do noble works because of the force of habit. Performance of a virtuous action may require appropriate complementary and enabling factors to be procured and arranged. Sometimes there could be unknown demerits in the procurement of such factors. *jīvanmuktas* are not scared of such drawbacks because they are indifferent to the benefits or losses that accrue from the actions.

Some of the seekers who are in an intermittent position may find it hard to achieve a balanced mind. A few of them stay back at home and pray, some go on pilgrimages, some leave for forests for meditation and so on.

jīvanmuktas like us perform sacrificial rituals. *jīvanmuktas* like you continue to rule the countries and go on wars. Irrespective of what they do, the balance of their mind is not upset. You are in such a Brahman state of equipoise now. May you stay that way forever !

There is nothing further to be instructed!

[**Note:** As Sage Vasishta reached the final stage of the marathon instruction, the sage himself, Rama as well as all others listening to the discourse entered into Nirvikalpa Samadhi. The entire Assembly was in absolute quietness.

75. Worshipping The Guru

Sage Viswamitra and later the rest of the participating Sages arose from the Samadhi. They were overjoyed at Sage Vasishta's powerful sermon and hailed him. Flowers were showered on him by the Heavens. Gods played divine musical instruments. Acclaimed Siddhas in the celestial sphere were unequivocal in declaring the teaching by Sage Vasishta to be very unique. They proclaimed that such a sermon was never heard before. They averred that even animals and birds in the region obtained liberation from the Sage's instructions. They sang paeans in his praise.

The inhabitants of Ayodhya reached the Palace hearing the tumultuous music of the gods. They shouted slogans hailing victory to the King. Emperor Dasarath performed the worship to Guru Vasishta with great reverence. He addressed the sage as follows.]

Dasarath: Gurudev! Whatever we may offer you will be completely inadequate and appear pale before the brilliance of the Knowledge you have bestowed on us. I present to you my empire. From now on you are the Emperor and I am your humble attendant.

Vasishta: (Smiling): Oh King Dasarath! Salutations are enough for us. What do I know about kingdoms? Only you can rule. So let the empire be with you.

[**Note:** Out of boundless admiration and reverence to the Sage, King Dasarath remained silent. Rama sprinkled flowers at the feet of the Sage and said to him as follows.]

Rama: Revered Guru! My father has not been able to utter a word in your presence. What can I say ? I can only bow down at your feet!

[**Note:** Rama was full of joy and saluted his Guru many a time. He was followed by his brothers Lakshman, Bharat, Shatrughnun and other members present in the Assembly in paying respects to the Sage. The Sage then addressed the Assembly with benevolence and humility.]

Vasishta: Viswamitra! Vamadeva! Nimi! Kratu! Bharadwaja! Pulastya! Atri! Ghrishti! Narada! Sandila! Bhasa! Bhrigu! Dharanda! Vatsa! Vatsayana! And other Maharishis, Saints and Members of the Assembly!

You heard my pointless talks! Hope they did not contain any unnecessary, improper or abusive words. In case you found any, please be kind to let me know.

[Note: The audience was stunned at the politeness and candor of the Sage. In one voice they praised him again and again. They said that the sound of even a single wasteful syllable from the Sage was impossible. They all agreed that he was the only Guru that could ever be. They expressed their heartfelt salutations repeatedly.

The Gods in the Heaven also bowed to Rama who had become a *jīvanmukta* as a lad. Everyone hailed victory to Rama.

In the midst of all the celebration and excitement in The Assembly, Sage Vasishta turned to Rama and addressed him thus:

Vasishta: How do you feel now, Rama? How does the world appear to you? Do you like to ask any questions now?

Rama: (In a polite and courteous tone) Respected Teacher! By your grace I am very

peaceful. I am free of the illusion. The binding knots in my heart are broken. I do not want to ask you anything nor listen to anything. I do not desire to possess anything either. I see the entire world as Consciousness-Self. I abide firmly in equanimity. I shall perform the works as approved by the scriptures desiring no rewards. I do not have likes and dislikes. I shall follow the scriptures as per your instruction. I do not have any further doubts.

Vasishta: Aha! You truly reached the Supreme Position! Consciousness-Space melded into Consciousness-Space. You will not suffer from sorrow. Your dynasty is purified by you. Now you may proceed to protect the sacrificial ritual of Sage Viswamitra as desired by him. Then take over the reigns of your father's empire. May those who depend on you achieve wealth and prosperity !

[**Note:** King Dasarath was very happy to listen to the blessings of the Sage. Rama described his condition of Supreme Bliss once again and said:

नैर्मल्यमभ्युपगतोऽस्मि नमोस्तु मह्यम् ।।

nairmalyamabhyupagato'smi namostu mahyam ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 202, Sloka 12

(Meaning: I am very calm and serene. Salutations to me by myself).

It was noon by then. Sage Vasishta closed the session for the day after asking Rama to contemplate over the things again and pose his doubts, if any, the next day. All the people departed to their respective places.

When the Assembly was reconvened the next morning, Rama was the first to speak.]

Rama: Sir, I am unable to think of anything to ask. If you consider that something important has to be said, please let us know.

Vasishta: You have realized the ultimate Truth. That is why you don't feel like raising any doubt. But examine critically and tell us about the way you are experiencing things inside you right now.

Rama: I am successful. I obtained Nirvana. You have taught us everything. I have understood what you taught. May your speech rest now !

76. Dropping The Perceivables

Vasishta: In spite of what you expressed, I shall delve on one more topic. The more you cleanse a mirror the better it shines. Similarly experiential awareness of Consciousness-Self gets firmed up the more you listen to the Knowledge of Truth.

The mirror I am referring to is none other than your mind. You have to wipe out and clean the world from it. There is a process for it. So please follow this.

The world is nothing but 'names and forms.' Names and forms are only sounds with a meaning attached to them. Let us delve into these a bit.

Say we hear the word "cow." A meaning immediately pops up in the mind. What does that mean? You thought of a form with four legs, two horns, frills in the dewlap etc. in your mind. This shape is the meaning you get for the word "cow."

What exactly is a form? You begin to imagine a shape and an image then appears to you because you had no Knowledge of Truth. Hence the form is a mere illusion. It is unreal. Therefore, it is clear that any sound that you may consider conveys a meaning which has no reality.

If you eliminate the attributed imagined meaning for the sound "cow" because it is unreal, what would remain is only some sound without a meaning. So the form the sound takes is a form which the ears only can detect. Then what difference does exist between the sound "cow" and some other sound like say "ding-dong" of a bell? Nothing really. Therefore, any second sound is untrue.

By pursuing such an analysis, you can see that all the sounds in the world and their meanings are untrue. Then where is the difference between the wakeful world and the dream world? What is the locus of the world then? Hence, though you apparently see a world, it is in fact not there at all!

This is a good way to practice the elimination of the perceivables.

Rama: How do the earth, the rock-solid mountains, the fundamental five elements originate according to this process?

Vasishta: Okay, let me know who created these in your dream, how they were created and finally how they were dissolved.

Rama: If we assume that the fundamental five elements of the wakeful world have a reality, we can state that the dreams are a result of the impressions carried over from the wakeful world. But we do not find a proper causation behind the wakeful state substances. They are unreal. Hence Pure Consciousness, the only Real Substance, appears as a wakeful world for some time and as dreamscape at other times.

It is not exactly correct even to say that Consciousness appears in two ways. The formless Pure Consciousness is unchanging and forever stays the same. A Knower of Truth sees It always as Consciousness. If an ignorant person sees some illusion, let him!

Thus far it is understandable. But, Sir, how does the formless Consciousness acquire a body (form) during awake and dream states? How to answer this question?

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 204.]

Vasishta: That is exactly the point. A body appears to be born where there is no 'thing.' Therefore, we have to say that it does not exist. Once you are able to grasp the concept of changeless change, your question does not arise. It is our stand that at the beginning of creation even the fundamental five elements have not originated. Then how can the body constituting the five elements have a reality? What exists is One alone. And that is Consciousness. It is draped by a variety of superimpositions. That is the final Truth.

Rama: You talked about a variety of universes previously also (in the stories of Leela, Bhusunda etc.). What type is our universe?

Vasishta: What is there to talk about again? We covered these topics in quite some detail already. Whichever universe it may be, what truly is, is Brahman, the substratum.

Rama: When did Brahman become the universe? How long would it exist in this form? What are its dimensions?

Vasishta: Brahman had never become the universe. It looks at itself as if it is transformed. It is something like you witnessing a dream. What measures can be given for something that does not exist? Once you wake up from sleep, the dream vanishes. If you wake up from ignorance, the universe will disappear (in the Seventh stage, Brahmavid Varishta) .

A long time ago a King by name Prajnapti swamped me with similar questions. If you listen to my response to his questions, all your doubts will be cleared.

77. Questions of King Prajnapti

Vasishta: (Continuing)The Kusa Islands exist in between the Liquor Sea and the Ghee Sea. Prajnapti was the King of the city Ilavati. I visited him on some errand. Perhaps he was already into Self-inquiry by then. He bombarded me with a series of questions. I shall first list here his questions.

King Prajnapti: My Lord! The Holiest of Saints! Several doubts have been nagging me for quite some time. Please listen to my questions and bless me with your answers.

1. It is said that the Supreme Brahman, inaccessible to the mind and speech alone, was present prior to creation. It is also said that there was nothing else.

That being the situation, what was the root cause for triggering the creation? What was the material cause for creation? What were the enabling causes? Was there one or more than one material cause?

2. It is said that there are a multitude of universes. It is also said that there is a huge variety of them. Some are said to be in space, some at the center of rocks, some as liquids, some as gas and some as fire.

What is the reason for such diversity?

3. Who created these universes, the inhabitants in the universes and the sense organs of the inhabitants? Who witnesses these worlds?

4. Vedas speak about both the ritual-oriented action and also Knowledge-oriented pursuit of Brahman. Therefore it is beholden to us to synthesize both approaches and enunciate a principle. As per this principle, the cycles of creation and dissolution will go on indefinitely and there is no stopping that.

Would you agree to that?

If you agree, we have to accept that the root causation for turning the wheel of creation and dissolution is human thinking because of the famous adage that what you experience follows what you think.

Do you accept it?

5. If that is granted, such a thought or knowledge can be either permanent or impermanent. If it is impermanent, what is the cause for its impermanency? We do not have an answer. If we suppose that the knowledge is permanent, we cannot conceive of changes happening within a permanent thing.

How do you reconcile the two concepts?

6. Suppose a man is dead. His body is consigned to flames. He goes to heaven or hell to reap the fruits of his actions. He cannot experience happiness or sorrow unless he is an embodied creature there. Who will be the parents for the new body? Scriptures are silent about this.

How could a body be born without any parentage?

7. We may propose that his sins and merits act as the parents for the new body. If so it would mean that the formless notions of sin and merit are able to engender physical bodies composed of substances. But this is impossible.

What then could cause the bodies having a noticeable form to emerge?

8. As a way out of this complication, one can argue that there is really no other world. This is the atheistic position. But there are problems with this concept also. If we accept that the visible world is real, we may expect a real cause behind it. That cause could be another world. But from the viewpoint of that world, our world will be the other world. Hence one cannot argue against another world. It is also contrary to what the Vedas declare.

9. I said a while ago that mere concepts having no form could not produce substances having a form. I am not too sure of it either. A King sits in his capital city. The people in a remote village under that kingdom are bound by the dictates of the King and suffer the punishment imposed by his orders. The orders of the King do not have a form. But the punishment meted out to the people is physically felt by their bodies. It would mean that the formless order has generated something with a form.
How do you explain this?

10. The scriptures ordain or prohibit certain things. Some people faithfully follow the stipulations. Some others do not care.
How do these things actually work?

11. An accomplished Yogi converts a stone column in no time into a golden pillar. How can that be done?

12. Vedas contain many mutually contradictory and opposing statements. For example:

असद्वा इदमग्र आसीत् । ततो वै सदजायत ।

asadvā idamagra āsīt | tato vai sadajāyata |

Taittariyopanishad Anandavalli -7-1

(Meaning: All this was non-existent at the beginning. Beingness was produced from it).

असदेवेदमग्र आसीत *asadevedamagra āsīt*

Chandogyopanishad Up. 2-1

(Meaning: This was all non-existence before creation).

सदेवेदमग्र आसीत - एकमेवाद्वितीयं *sadevedamagra āsīta - ekamevādvitīyaṃ*

Chandogyopanishad 2-1

(Meaning: This was beingness prior to creation. It is One, without a second).

नासदासीन्नोसदासीत् तदानीम् *nāsadāsīnnosadāsīt tadānīm*

Nasadiya Sukta

(Meaning: There was neither beingness nor non-beingness then (= prior to creation)). How do you build a convergence of these diverse declarations?

13. Sages like you say that the Pure Consciousness changed to Hiranyagarbha first at the beginning of the creation. It is said that the rest of the creation was made by him. It means that Hiranyagarbha was born from space.

Is it your contention that It has such a power because It is not just space but It is Consciousness-Space? If It has intrinsically such power, why cannot more Hiranyagarbhas be born out of It?

14. Fire is always hot; water is ever cool and so on within this creation. We notice such inherent order in all substances.

How did such Laws of Nature get embedded in this creation?

15. Elders advise that we should perform austerities and meditation to get relieved of such doubts. They speak of austerities and meditation as a means for the fulfillment of any desire. Suppose a person has a close friend and a sworn enemy. The friend observes austerities desiring a long life for him. The enemy performs the austerities with a wish for his immediate death. Both the friend and enemy are very strong.

How do their austerities take effect?

16. In another example, say, a dozen young men of letters are enthralled by the beauty of the moon. They meditate at the same time with a yearning to become the moon.

If their desire gets fulfilled, do we then see a dozen moons simultaneously in the sky?

17. There is a more complex problem. I know a very beautiful lady. She practices detachment. She deserted her house when she was young. She commenced performance of austerities with a wish to remain unmarried for life. But a handful of eligible youth were captivated by her beauty and fell in love with her. Each of them began austerities and meditation longing to marry and keep her as his wife.

How will their meditation take effect?

18. A smart guy meditated rigorously. His personal God was pleased with his meditation and manifested in front of him. He requested God to grant him a boon so that he would be the Emperor for the seven islands till the time of Great Dissolution without having to budge out of his house.

How can God grant a boon like that?

19. People make offerings and donations. They observe the annual death ceremonies. It is said that such acts yield the fruits in the higher world. The rationale behind it is given to be that an "invisible" thing is born here and the same invisible thing bestows the rewards in the higher worlds. The "invisible" thing has no form. This formless substance is supposed to be admixed with an embodied being having a form and show the result in a different place at a different time in different ways. Somehow this does not appeal very much.

How do you justify that expectation?

Vasishta: Oh, King Prajnapti! These are very interesting questions. I may not answer your questions sequentially. However, I shall explain all the points raised by you through a coherent and comprehensive response. Please follow my presentation attentively.

You have an awareness of a thing 'being' present and also a thing 'not being' present. If you carefully look at it, what you have in both cases is awareness. Awareness is knowledge.

But knowledge has a peculiar quality. It shows the things in the way it conceives them. If it strongly feels that a thing 'is' there, it will be there. If it feels strongly that it 'is not' there, it will not be there. A good example for this is the dreamscape. The knowledge within you felt during the period of dreaming that the dream world existed. Then the dream world attained beingness and showed up. After a while, the knowledge within you felt that it was not there. Immediately it disappears. You call it waking up.

We can infer from this that 'is' and 'is not' (a thing being present or not being present) are different forms of knowledge. What really is in both the cases is knowledge or awareness. Hence if the knowledge within you feels anywhere anytime that it has a body, there will be a body. If it feels otherwise, there will not be a body. When it feels the body is there, the knowledge thinks that it is the body. It superimposes the qualities of the body on knowledge and the qualities of knowledge on the body. This is how bodies are generated and maintained.

Your question was on how bodies could be produced in heaven and hell. You can understand that they are born by the process of superimposition by knowledge.

Here is an important point that you may take note of. When I say knowledge, I do not mean the Supreme Knowledge of Brahman. Pure Knowledge of Brahman is different from the knowledge that makes you aware of your body and senses. The quality of 'knowing' is a property of the knower. In other words it is his nature. It

exists as an illusion.

Let us consider dreams as an example. You think, at the time of dreaming, that you are witnessing some objects which are separate from you. But the fact is you witness yourself! That is to say that you are “awaring” yourself. This sort of ‘knowing’ is your nature.

During your wakeful state also it works the same way. Certain awareness within you takes the form of your body. You do not have anybody beyond this. If you understand this clearly, it will answer the first seven of your questions.

In your next question you raised the issue of atheism. The atheists opine that the body is responsible for awareness. It implies that consciousness emanates from an inert substance. This is totally unacceptable. But they come up with a counter question. If a body is produced from Consciousness as we say, they ask why the body lacks the ability to be aware of things after death. My answer is as follows:

You are Consciousness-Self. The dream world originated from you. Therefore, it has to be conscious like you. Why then the inert things like rocks and stones appear in the dream? The only answer for this question is that you had certain thoughts at the beginning of the dream. You witness some things that are sentient and some things that are insentient in your dream corresponding to those initial thoughts. In other words, you yourself appear as an inert substance at some places and as a conscious substance at other places in the dreamscape based on your initial thoughts. This is true from your own experience.

Because of the nature of the first thought that occurred to Hiranyagarbha at the moment of beginning the creation, you find a dead body to be inert. This is a finding that is only apparently so. The fact is the entire world is Consciousness just like the total dreamscape is you yourself. What causes your body is also the same thing. So the argument of the atheist does not stand to reason. We do not, therefore, support it.

You brought up a new issue of substances with form and without form in your ninth question. This question does not stand any ground as we have already said that the entire creation is of illusory origin and that there is no solid reason behind creation.

It is in your experience that Consciousness-Self appears as a dream when you are alive. Similarly, after death, Consciousness-Self appears as the higher world. The unavoidable cycle of wakeful and dream states while living and higher worlds after death go on appearing till one obtains perfect Self-Knowledge. The effects of good actions, donations, offerings to the dead etc. are also experienced as a part of this illusory cycle. That is why we declare that scriptures are true only until one is liberated. There is nothing illogical in this proposition. This answers your last

question.

The eleventh question of yours concerns the powers of performing miracle by Yogis. These things happen as per the laws embedded in the initial thought pattern of Hiranyagarbha. That is to say that Hiranyagarbha must have wished for the transformation of things as per the curses and boons of Yogis and certain others.

We do not have to search far from the thought process of Hiranyagarbha to find the cause-effect relationships in the world. Even the temporary appearance of this non-existent world and its later disappearance is also a part of Hiranyagarbha's original thought. A poetic way of saying it is: it is creation when Consciousness opens Its eyes; it is dissolution when It closes Its eyes.

King Prajnapti: Maharishi! If the world comes into being because of Hiranyagarbha's thoughts, why would it have to go through periods of dissolution? When once he thinks of creating, the creation could as well stay permanently!

Vasishta: Dear King! You yourself conceived the dream world. But it does not stay permanently. Why? It is so because of the innate nature of your thought. No purpose is served by looking for the causes of the innate nature of the thought. Just as it is the nature of your thoughts in the case of your dreams, it is the nature of Hirnayagarbha's thoughts to make the worlds disappear during deep sleep, dissolution and Nirvana. For the same reason, fire is hot, water is cool and so on. This answers your 14th question too.

सत्यंच अनृतंच सत्यमभवत् *satyaṃca anṛtaṃca satyamabhavat*
(Meaning: Brahman, the Truth, exists as Real and unreal).

That is the nature of Pure Consciousness. You derive the attributes of creation based on this. This will also bring necessary convergence to the Vedic statements referred by you in your 12th question.

You had several doubts about the results of performing austerities and meditation in your questions from 15th to 18th. Before going into those issues, you need to know a few basics about righteousness and impropriety. The scriptures say:

धर्मेन पापमपनुदति *dharmena pāpamapanudati*

(Meaning: A man should cleanse his sins by following righteous path).

Boons and curses, merit and sin and so on work like mutually opposing forces. The austerities performed by friends and foes also operate on the same principle. If they are of equal strength, they cancel out each other. Otherwise their algebraic sum will be the resultant effect. Sometimes it may so happen that the opposing forces cannot cancel out one another. Then the individual obtains two bodies in order to experience both the effects simultaneously. The two bodies may be

externally visible or only one of them visible to outsiders and the other visible only to him.

In a case as described by you where a well-wisher prays for the longevity of an individual's life and the enemy prays for immediate death, the individual may reap the benefit of his friend's prayer in his normal body and go through the throes of death in another imaginary body in another imaginary place.

King Prajnapti: My contention is that it is not possible to get a body from the formless piety (*dharma*) and impiety (*adharma*). How can you say that not one but even two bodies can be obtained from such conceptual things?

Vasishta: Why two, depending on the situation, even a thousand bodies may be produced! Are you alone not becoming battalions of armies fighting each other in your dream world? How can you set any limiting condition of numbers on conceptually generated pure imaginary worlds?

King Prajnapti: On one hand you argue that the entire world is an illusion. On the other you argue that the curses and boons, higher worlds etc. are real. This is very unreasonable !

Vasishta: If you admit that the world is a mere fantasy, there is no argument! Not only is this world, the higher world too is an illusion. Actions and results of actions are also an illusion. That is in fact the Ultimate Truth! But your questions are not based on the final Truth. Your questions are all based on the presumption that the world is real. Therefore, I respond to you at the same level as if this world, the higher worlds and so on are real.

Then you counter me by saying how there can be so many mutual contradictions within it. My reply is that the world is like a dream. It is purely a fantasy. Hence anything may happen within it! What I said is not untenable. You will have no confusion if you see things from a correct perspective.

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 209.]

Your 16th question was whether there would be a dozen moons in the sky if a dozen people meditate successfully wishing to be moons. Suppose two people look at the moon. Both of them think that they are seeing one and the same moon. The entire world functions with such a belief. This is plainly an unsupported assumption and is not the Truth.

The fact is each person lives in his private world created by his own imagination. He does not live in a world created by others. Each to himself! Though the worlds seem to merge into one another like a hand into a glove, two worlds are never the same. Their skies are different and so also the moons.

So if a dozen people wish to become the moon, each will become a moon in his own imaginary world. One will not appear in the sky of the other. The dozen of

them will thus become moons. We discussed some of these things in the Story of Indavas.

Depending on the strength of his thoughts, each man would become the Hiranyagarbha of his world. The Indavas did become like that. You had asked why there should be only one Hiranyagarbha. There is no particular significance whether it is one or many. Each person's world is his fantasy. It is equivalent to a dream. If you can understand this, you need not raise this question at all.

[**Note:** The original text does not offer a straight answer to the 13th question of King Prajnapti. We have to infer the answer from the total context as above.]

Your 17th question regarding the beautiful lady or the next question on the indolent king who wanted to rule the seven islands without leaving his home can also be resolved on the above basis. The lazy man can create the islands in his imagination sitting in his room. These were discussed in detail earlier in the Story of Leela.

My Dear King! I covered all your questions. As you may have observed, the underpinning argument for all my replies is that the visible world is just an imagined creation of the only One Thing that exists – Pure Consciousness. This is the final Truth. You can understand all the remaining things based on this fact.

King Prajnapti: Great Sage! I can appreciate very well what you said. However, I still have doubts. According to you, the embodied entity Hiranyagarbha was born at the beginning of creation because of a thought. But what we normally find in the world is that we need a body first in order that the consciousness in that body can start conceptualizing a world. We do not find a consciousness without a body imagining things. If we apply this observation to the first born Hiranyagarbha, he can begin to imagine the world only after he gets a body. But a body cannot be there unless there is an imagination as you put it. How does your theory resolve this conundrum ?

Vasishta: It is not valid to say that Consciousness originates from a body. Consciousness is prior to creation. The body is a thing created. The body is a pure imagined entity. What has come later cannot be the substrate for the first thing. An imagined entity cannot be the support for a real thing. Hence it is incorrect to hold that Consciousness is dependent on the body. You say that Consciousness is expressed only where there is a body and not otherwise. It is not because Consciousness is absent at other places. It is rather your inability to know Consciousness which is everywhere. You classify certain objects of your dream as conscious and certain others as inert though it is entirely your consciousness. Everything that exists in the dream world or wakeful world, whether inert or conscious, is Consciousness. Brahman is Consciousness. Hence there is no dependency of one over the other as everything is only One Consciousness.

King Prajnapti: Sir, you hold that the body of the wakeful state is a form of Consciousness and so also the body in the dream state. Why do you then teach us that the wakeful state body is similar to the dream state body ?

Vasishta: It is just an expression used at the initial stages to make things simple for you to understand. We have to find an illustration to teach you that the body that is seen, though visible, is unreal and it is none other than Brahman in its true substance. Your dream body fits that example. Your dream body is unreal even at the time you are able to see it. From the substrate point of view, it is you yourself. Thus there is a similarity between the wakeful state body and the dream state body.

Just as the dream state body in reality is you yourself, the true form of the wakeful state body is Brahman. The dream body illustrates this point well. That was all the intent; but it is not to say that the dream state body is different from the wakeful state body.

The Truth is that anything seen appears because of misapprehension. What appears because of misapprehension cannot be True. Hence there is no wakeful state; there is no dream state; there is no deep sleep state; everything is a form of the Consciousness-Space.

If you know Pure Brahman as Pure Brahman, it is Nirvana. If you do not, it is bondage. This is the final message!

King Prajnapti: Maharishi! My doubts stand cleared by your benevolence!

78. Are There Alien Worlds ?

Vasishta: Rama, I recounted my conversation with King Prajnapti in the Kusa Islands because you asked me about the dimensions and extension of Brahman in space and time. You can derive from this long dialog that such concepts of measurements are not applicable to Brahman.

Rama: Respected Sir! You said that you yourself visited the Kusa isles that were in between the Oceans of Liquor and Ghee. Neither of those oceans is visible for people like me. Sacred texts talk about the world of the Adepts, world of Gods, world of Sadhyas (a variety of godly beings) and so on. Who is able to see those worlds or their denizens ? How is one able to see them?

Vasishta: Rama, there are essentially two types of such worlds. They are the Stable and the Mobile worlds. The Stable worlds are: Mahah, Janah, Tapah, Satya etc. They are located far away from us.

स यदि पितृलोककामो भवति संकल्पादेवास्य पितरः
समुत्तिष्ठन्ति तेन पितृलोकेन सम्पन्नो महीयते ॥ ८.२.१॥

sa yadi pitṛlokakāmo bhavati saṃkalpādevāsya pitaraḥ
samuttiṣṭhanti tena pitṛlokena sampanno mahīyate || 8.2.1||

Chandogyopanishad 8-2-1

(Meaning: If a worshipper of a God with attributes (with a form) desires to go to the world of ancestors (*Pitr loka*), his ancestors will welcome him as per his thoughts. He will reach the world of the ancestors).

Thus declare Chandogya and a few other Upanishads. These are the conceptual worlds. They keep moving like wind along with the individual to wherever he goes. Hence these are termed Mobile worlds.

All these worlds are produced because of the intentions of some one or the other. If a person pursues Yoga practices meticulously with a strong desire, his desire takes a form and condenses as a world. People like you generate worlds during your dreams. But you are unable to concretize them. It can be done if you have an intense determination.

Because of the buildup of the intentions of several people, stable worlds like Satya and others took shape. The intentions of individual Yogis also produce worlds but these stick around those Yogis. That is all the difference.

Those who perform virtuous deeds (meritorious acts) access Heavenly worlds with ease. They move around and live long in those worlds as freely as we do in this world. Those who enter into Heavenly worlds through Yoga will find it a bit hard to live in those worlds. These Yogis return to earth sooner.

One can achieve the Stable or Mobile worlds using the power of Yoga. One can also enter the dream worlds of others by yogic practices. You can also see any world through focused practice. But there is no particular purpose served by these painstaking practices and achievements. Whatever may be the world, it is conceptually generated. It is an illusory world! What truly exists is Pure Brahman. All of the worlds do not matter for one who attains the Supreme Brahman.

Rama, what I said here may appear a bit contrary to what other Sages say. Some of them may say that those worlds are real like the earth. Others may totally deny their existence.

इत्थमस्तु यदि वान्यथास्तु वा मैव भूद्भवतु कोऽत्र संभ्रमः ।
मुञ्च फल्गुनि फले फलग्रहं बुद्धवानसि कृतं परिश्रमैः ।।

itthamastu yadi vānyathāstu vā maiva bhūdbhavatu ko'tra saṃbhramaḥ |
muñca phalguni phale phalagrahaṃ buddhavānasi kṛtaṃ pariśramaiḥ ||
Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 211, Sloka 30

(Meaning: Let the worlds be illusory or let them not be. Let them exist or not exist. What do we care about ? You have worked real hard. You understood the Self-Knowledge. Do not pay attention to these pedestrian yogic accomplishments. Simply ignore them).

The final carry home message is that what exists is the Supreme Brahman

alone. The Collective form of I-consciousness viz. Hiranyagarbha is superimposed on Brahman by illusion. The world is superimposed on Hiranyagarbha. Separate individuals are superimposed on the world. These imagined layers of superimposition go on and on. Anything that is perceived is nothing but a changelessly-changed form of Brahman. The word 'changeless-change' is also a concept. It is not the last word.

Even to say this much is too much! What is, is Brahman.

And that is the essence of Vedanta.

Rama: Who is it that fantasizes? The Supreme Brahman is the only one existing prior to any of the fantasy or creation. Therefore, it must be the Supreme Brahman who fantasizes. It is a pure unpolluted substance which is immutable. How is it then possible to propose that Brahman imagines I-consciousness etc. on Itself for some of the time and stays as It is at other times?

Vasishta: What you say is absolutely correct ! But when a thing has to be explained, it is necessary to explain it from the perspective from which the question arises. The point of view of the questioner has to be the starting position. That is inevitable.

We have already talked about three points of view – the Absolute stance from the position of Knowledge; the empirical stance from the position of ignorance; and the mixed view. The empirical stance from ignorance is based on the belief that the world is real. The Absolute stance from the position of Knowledge is based on Truth that the world has no beingness at all. The mixed viewpoint begins with an acceptance of the reality of the world. Problems with such a view are discovered later. The discovery triggers a process of self inquiry. Any teaching is done from this viewpoint.

In fact, the various viewpoints pertain to the realm of the individual (*jīva*) desirous of knowing the Truth. Pure Brahman shines gloriously with Self-effulgence all by itself or appears as the world under Its own illumination without a reference to any of the viewpoints.

The statement that "the word 'changeless-change' is a concoction" is made from the Absolute point of view. The statement that "a succession of imaginary layers is superimposed on Brahman" is made from the mixed viewpoint. If this core issue is imbibed clearly, you will see that there is no difference between Brahman and the world just as there is no difference between wind and movement. Your question will then lose its locus.

Rama: Well said Teacher! Thank you. Perhaps I interrupted you when you were dwelling on the issue of the string of illusory creations superimposed on Brahman. Do you like to take it to its logical conclusion ?

Vasishta: No, there is nothing new to be added. I-consciousness or ego arises first. After that come the five fundamental elements. The space-time divisions follow suit.

The conceptualization progressively enlarges. We cannot for sure say that that is the only way. It is Brahman that superimposes 'individuality' (*jīvatva*) on Itself and looks at the world. It obtains the Knowledge of Truth by Itself and remains as it is !

[**Note:** Here ends the Sarga 212.]

79. Past Life of Rama

Vasishta: Rama! Your questions remind me of an event that happened a long time ago. You were one of my disciples in your past birth. You were not a prince in that birth. You studied Vedas under my tutelage. You had a conversation with me at that time almost on the same lines. Our discussion proceeded as follows:

Rama in His Past Life: Revered Guru! What is that substance that does not get annihilated in a Great Dissolution?

Vasishta: My Dear! You consider your deep sleep state. You had a dream and it was followed by deep sleep. What has remained of the dream in the deep sleep state? The land, time, cardinal directions, mind, I-consciousness and even space of the dream world have disappeared. But you who witnessed all the things that were gone remain as you are. It happens the same way at the time of Dissolution. Only you, the witness remain. Nothing else survives. If you say that you also did not survive dissolution, there is no scope to even say that Dissolution took place. Hence we have to agree that you, the witness, survived Dissolution.

Rama in His Past Life: Teacher !

नासतो विद्यते भावः नाभावो विद्यते सतः

nāsato vidyate bhāvaḥ nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ

(Meaning: The unreal never is. The Real never is not).

The above maxim is well known. What would suddenly happen to this world which appears so solid and real? Where does it disappear to?

Vasishta: The adage quoted by you is absolutely correct. You are able to see the water clearly in a mirage. But it disappears when you go near it. Where has the water gone ? It disappeared because it had no 'beingness' in it. The world also disappears the same way to the same place!

Rama in His Past Life: In the example of mirage given by you, it is the rays of the sun that caused the false appearance of water. Who assumes this fake appearance of the world?

Vasishta: Pure Consciousness-space appears in the garb of the world.
Suppose you got into a pool of crystal clear water. You will see your reflection in the

water. Does it mean that you are split into two? No. If you come back to the bank, you are the only one. In a similar manner, Pure Supreme Brahman appears with a multitude of forms during the creation phase. He remains as one during Dissolution.

Rama in His Past Life: Your answers are all based on the metaphor of dreams. Even though the world is dissolved for me during my deep sleep, it continues to appear the same way to others who are not asleep. Will the world be visible to some people likewise during Dissolution?

Vasishta: I cannot say it is this world; but a world does appear to some people. After all, each person is in his own world. I elaborately discussed this matter in the Story of Indavas. We see all sorts of objects superimposed on the Pure Consciousness because of a changeless-change.
Hence whatever is seen is due to the thoughts in the mind.

The imagination of each person depends on the way his thinking goes. Each man theorizes a particular person to be the causal source for the creation he himself imagines. He then goes on defending his theory. We cannot strike down any one's theory.

सर्वमेव पदे तस्मिन्संभवत्युत्तमोत्तमे ।
विधयः प्रतिषेधाश्च के ते सन्ति न सन्ति के ।।

sarvameva pade tasminsaṃbhavatyuttamottame |
vidhayaḥ pratiṣedhāśca ke te santi na santi ke ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 213, Sloka 45

(Meaning: That fundamental Substrate is the most Supreme. Anything can happen in it. What formulations are proscribed in it ? What restrictions are applicable to it ?).

A person's experience is a function of his thinking. So a person's experience is real as far as his viewpoint is concerned. For others they are like unicorns or the horn of a hare – non-existent. Therefore, it is a waste of effort to run after conceptual theories. Get a handle on the fundamental Truth.

(Now addressing Rama): Rama, that was my sermon to you in the past. You were not enlightened at that time. You are asking the same doubts once again in this birth. This time round, my instructions have fructified. You are a *jīvanmukta* now. Abide in Nirvana firmly, transcend desires and rule over your Kingdom righteously!

[**Note:** No sooner Sage Vasistha ended his speech, flowers showered from the Heavens above. Celestial instruments resounded. The entire Assembly worshipped the Sage one more time. King Dasarath, Rama, Lakshman, Viswamitra, Narada and many others extolled him very highly.

It may be mentioned here that quite a few resemblances can be noticed in the

words spoken by Rama in his thanksgiving speech and the words uttered by Arjun towards the end of the last Chapter of Bhagavad-Gita. Though the verses are different, certain phrases are common to both the texts:

नष्टो मोहः - स्थितोऽस्मि गतसंदेहः - करिष्ये वचनं तव ।।

naṣṭo mohaḥ - sthito'smi gatasaṃdehaḥ - kariṣye vacanaṃ tava ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 214, Sloka 14 - 15

The respective meanings are:
Relieved of ignorance - Doubts stand cleared - Will obey your instruction.

While the Assembly was reverentially involved in praising the glory of the Sage and Rama, Sage Vasishta suggested to King Dasarath that it would be auspicious for all to worship and feed the Brahmins at the culmination of such an event. King Dasarath readily accepted the advice and announced a seven day programme of celebrations. The King not only honored the Brahmins, he also organized gifts and feeding to other categories of the society, the poor, and the underprivileged.

Thus culminates the noble opus of Sage Valmiki.

In the opening chapter of Yoga Vasishta, Sage Valmiki made a few observations about the communication of the message in the text while mentioning who taught it to whom. These issues are once again taken up by him for a discussion. He added some more words on the value of the message and the method of its instruction. He devoted two Sargas for this as the finale. We shall now take a brief look at these two Sargas.]

80. Closure of The Sermon

Sage Valmiki: My Dear Bharadwaj ! I narrated to you the complete instruction of Sage Vasishta to Sri Rama. The teaching helped Rama to gain JIvanmukti. You too have realized the Self. But do not fall back into the mire of desires and lose the noble Knowledge. It is now up to you to secure it.

Reading this exalted text repeatedly, preaching it, facilitating its teaching or distributing copies of it to eligible students yields heavenly comforts. One may achieve Nirvana if these deeds are performed without seeking any returns.

Once I happened to recite this noble text in a large assemblage of saints. God Brahma listened to it and proclaimed that my words were not untrue. After listening to me in that gathering, Maharishi Agastya taught it to his disciple Sutishna. At another time, Lord Indra sent to me King Arishtanemi who performed sacrificial rituals without a desire. I gave the instruction to him as per this text. Consequently, he attained Self-realization. He in turn taught it to a Nymph. She also obtained Nirvana.

A householder by name Agnivesya taught it to his son who was in a dilemma whether to follow the Knowledge Path or the Path of Karma. The son was able to get clarity in his thought and resolutely pursued Knowledge. Pupils Sutishna and others bowed to their teachers. The great text closes with the words:

यत्सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म तज्जलानिति च स्फुटम् ।
श्रुत्वा ह्युदीर्यते साम्नि तस्मै ब्रह्मात्मने नमः ।।

yatsarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma tajjalāniti ca sphuṭam |
śrutvā hyudīryate sāmni tasmai brahmātmane namaḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 216, Sloka 25

(Meaning: The Chandogya Upanishad says:

सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म - तज्जलानीति शान्त उपासीत

sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma - tajjalānīti śānta upāsīta

It means that the entire visible world is Supreme Brahman because all of this is born from the Supreme Brahman, it is sustained by Brahman and it is dissolved into Brahman. Therefore, a spiritual aspirant should pursue Self-inquiry in peace with the thought that he is himself that Brahman. Salutations to myself who is thus established to be none other than Brahman! Salutations to me who is a solidification of Consciousness-Bliss!

ब्रह्मानन्दं परमसुखदं केवलं ज्ञानमूर्तिं
द्वन्द्वातीतं गगनसदृशं तत्त्वमस्यादिलक्ष्यम् ।
एकं नित्यं विमलमचलं सर्वधीसाक्षिभूतं
भावातीतं त्रिगुणरहितं श्रीवसिष्ठं नताःस्मः।।

brahmānandaṃ paramasukhadaṃ kevalaṃ jñānamūrtiṃ
dvandvātītaṃ gaganasadṛśaṃ tattvamasyādilakṣyam |
ekaṃ nityaṃ vimalamacalaṃ sarvadhīsākṣibhūtaṃ
bhāvātītaṃ triguṇarahitaṃ śrīvasiṣṭhaṃ natāḥsmaḥ||
Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 216, Sloka 26

[**Note:** This celebrated sloka occurs at the end of Yoga Vasishta text. It is presented here in praise of Sage Vasishta. Chanting of the verse is very popular as an invocation to the Guru. The Commentator, Shri ABS, did not annotate on this verse.

Meaning : We bow down to venerable Maharishi Vasishta Who is An embodiment of the Supreme Bliss, A Bestower of unparalleled Happiness, The Quintessence of Pure Knowledge, Who transcended the pairs of opposites and dualities, Who resembles space in being unattached to anything, Who is a Personification of the essential meaning of the Vedic aphorisms like *tat tvam asi*, The only One, Eternal, Untainted, Stable like a rock, The witness of all minds, Inaccessible to the intellect and who Transcended the three Guans (qualities of *satva*,

rajas and *tamas*).

81. Review of Yoga Vasishta, Book 7, Nirvana Prakarana, Uttrārdha, Chapter on Liberation

It is a tradition in the Sanskrit scriptures to pronounce at the end the benefits that accrue from a reading of the sacred text. Yoga Vasishta, Book 6, Nirvana Prakarana, Pūrvārdha, Chapter on Liberation fittingly closes with the following propitious words:

य इमं श्रृणुयान्नित्यं विधिं रामवसिष्ठयोः ।
सर्वावस्थोऽपि श्रवणान्मुच्यते ब्रह्म गच्छति ।।

ya imaṃ śrṛṇuyānnityaṃ vidhiṃ rāmavasiṣṭhayoḥ |
sarvāvastho'pi śravaṇānmucyate brahma gacchati ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - pūrvārdha, Sarga 128, Sloka 111

(Meaning: Any one, however lowly he may be, will be liberated and will attain Oneness with Brahman by listening daily to the conversation of Sage Vasishta and Rama).

However, Sage Valmiki continues Yoga Vasishta penning an elaborate second part of the chapter even after the citation of the benefits. In Ramayana also, his other popular work, the advantages of reading Ramayana were spelt out at the end of the "Canto War (Yuddhakanda)." But then he continued the text into the next canto, Uttarakanda.

Attainment of Self-Knowledge was explicated in detail in three chapters — The Creation, The Sustenance and The Calm down. It was once again explained in Yoga Vasishta, Book 6, Nirvana Prakarana, pūrvārdha, the chapter on Liberation. The Sage desires to emphasize that one cannot afford to be smug from a mere theoretical understanding of the subject with regard to liberation. Seeking does not come to an end either by the discovery of a proper method for liberation or even by achieving "*Nirvikalpa samādhi* (thoughtless meditative state)" for short durations of time.

It was shown at the end of Yoga Vasishta, Book 6, Nirvana Prakarana, pūrvārdha, the chapter on Liberation that Sri Rama achieved the supreme *samādhi* merely by listening to Sage Vasishta's teaching (*ṣravana*) and a reflection on what was heard (*Manana*).

A seeker may wonder whether such an individual can come back into the ordinary world or not. There can be questions also on the way he would function in his everyday life. Sage Valmiki took up the second part of the chapter Nirvana in order to provide answers to such questions. However, the answers are presented here from the perspective of a Siddha (one who attained Self-Knowledge).

A seeker, even after experientially understanding Brahman, has to meet the

requirements of the body as long as he is alive. There could be disciples constantly disturbing him seeking guidance. In addition, his residual current suffrage (*prārabdha*) which has yet to be expended will be operative and keeps coming in the way of his ability to stay unswervingly in Brahman.

Therefore, a complete treatise on Self-Knowledge should deal with the everyday problems faced by an embodied *jīvanmukta*, his conduct in daily life and the steps he can take to stay uninterruptedly in Brahman. Sage Valmiki takes up these matters in Yoga Vasishta, Book 7, Nirvana Prakarana, Uttrārdha, Chapter on Liberation. This book wraps within itself two splendid features. Firstly, it encapsulates superbly the profound message of the entire scripture and secondly, it serves as a guidepost for the day to day life of the *sādhak* in the post-Nirvana phase.

Yoga Vasishta, Book 7, Nirvana Prakarana, Uttrārdha, Chapter on Liberation opens with the question which was being deliberated at the end of Yoga Vasishta, Book 6, Nirvana Prakarana, pūrvārdha, the chapter on Liberation just before Rama went into *samādhi*.

अहंममेति संविदन्न दुःखतो विमुच्यते ।
असंविदन्विमुच्यते यदीप्सितं समाचर ॥

ahaṃmameti saṃvidanna duḥkhato vimucyate |
asaṃvidanvimucyate yadīpsitaṃ samācara ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - pūrvārdha, Sarga 126, Sloka 102

(Meaning: Misery will be inevitable as long as the feelings of ‘Me’ and ‘Mine’ persist. Sorrow ends with the extermination of the feeling of ‘Me’ and ‘Mine’. That is liberation. Now you choose what you like).

Sage Vasishta, like any good Guru, desired that Rama should once again recall his teachings systematically. He used this opportunity to cast the Advaita philosophy from the position of a *jīvanmukta*.

The Guru selects an eligible student out of those who approach him for the teaching. He carves his teaching to match the needs of the disciple using the Upanishads to communicate the philosophy of Truth. The essence of the Truth may also be conveyed through a Spontaneous Expression — the teacher sharing his ecstasy of abiding in the Supreme Bliss of Brahman as one finds in *avadhūta gīta, aśtāvakra samhita* etc.

Knowledge of Truth gets also imparted through a well Structured Method by developing basic documents that present the arguments of Advaita countering all opposing theories and then instruct the students in a progressive manner as was done by Gurus like Shri Sankara. Prakarana granthas, or specially prepared Treatises and Monographs of Shri Sankara and others are also used in teaching the ultimate Truth in a simple manner understandable to even non-scholars. Yoga Vasishta uniquely combines all the above methods in providing a clear expression of Self-Knowledge.

Redundancy was purposefully built into the text while at the same time taking care to present the subject matter each time in a novel way. Sage Valmiki sternly warned the reader not to skip the parts that look repetitious:

भस्माप्याप्नोति नाधमः *bhasmāpyāpnoti nādhamaḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 163, Sloka 49

(Meaning: The lowly one who skips parts (of the text) as mere repetition will not receive even the ashes).

Sage Vasishta clearly expresses that the physical body will not drop off on the attainment of *jīvanmukti*. His emphasis is more on abjuring desire rather than renouncing action as a means to the Supreme. Control of the senses and ego plays a significant role in this process. He exemplifies these aspects narrating the story of Vidhyadhara and his much loved Sage Bhusunda. The Sage drives home the point that "neither fear of punishment nor scare of disgrace should be the reason behind the control of the senses." He says that the control should be achieved from understanding clearly that Pure Consciousness alone and no 'thing' else exists in the world. He points out that there is no difference between the inert and conscious objects and illustrates this fact with the Story of Indra (Universe Lies At The Center Of A Subatomic Particle (Section 7)).

The Sage underscores the fact that it is necessary for a seeker to be a 'Knower of Truth' rather than an 'Expert on Truth.' He narrates the story of Brahmin Manki in support of this. He explains in this context the technical terms like Perception (*Samvedana*), Reminiscence (*bhāvana*), Impressions or Innate tendencies (*vāsana*), Recapitualtion (*Kalana*), Veiling power, Projection power etc.

Sage Vasishta tells us that only such Gurus who obtained Self-Knowledge can instruct on Truth. But such Gurus would have by then transcended worldly affairs. Consequently, bondage itself is non-existent from their perspective. But the Sage advises the normal aspirant not to give up various spiritual practices in order to attain Self-Knowledge. He gives many examples to prove his point. He alludes to the technical words *rūpāloka* (Present time) and *Manaskara* (Future time) used in Yoga Vasishta, Book 5, Upasama Prakarana, the chapter on 'The Calm Down'.

The Sage considers a Guru to be necessary to impart Self-Knowledge; but at the same time he is unequivocal that the Guru cannot bestow liberation. He exhorts the disciple to drop worshipping gods seeking the fulfillment of desires. He directs the adoption of the process of Meditation on Divinity as One's own self (*aham grahopasana*), perking up detachment for liberation. He spells out the details of the methods of meditation and describes the stages on the Path of *Yoga* and *samādhi*.

The sage here offers an important piece of advice in way of guidance to the

aspirants on the spiritual path:

श्रुतपाठजपान्तेषु समाधिनिरतो भवेत् ।
समाधिविरतः श्रान्तः श्रुतपाठजपाञ्छ्रयेत् ।।

śrutapāṭhajapānteṣu samādhinirato bhavet |
samādhiviratah śrāntaḥ śrutapāṭhajapāñchrayet ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 46, Sloka 23

(Meaning: For a good practice of *samādhi*, study Vedas along with your teacher and co-students. Understand Upanishads by yourself. Recite Aum repeatedly. Conducting yourself thus, gently get into Samadhi. In case you feel tired and come out of *samādhi*, take recourse to studying Vedas, reading Upanishads and recitation of Aum; but do not lose your focus.)

The Sage cautions against mad and unwise Practices of Detachment because some of the seekers tend to go astray at this juncture.

The Sage groups all the human beings into seven categories depending on their innate tendencies. He proceeds then to examine the question whether the visible world is an illusion or Brahman. He resolves the issue by stating that the world is an illusion from the perspective of a seeker and it is Brahman from the stance of the Knower of Truth. He establishes once again that the dualistic vision of sentience and insentience is artificial and non-existent.

Sage Vasishta presents the Story of Hard Rock in further support of this contention. He links with it the story of Vidhyadhari and elaborates upon the Dissolution of the Fundamental Elements (*vaijnyanika pralaya*) and Dissolution Of The Causal Factors (*prākrita pralaya*). He narrates these stories from a deep philosophical perspective and strikes down atheistic arguments.

Sage Vasishta introduces a new twist at this point. He says that both creation and dissolution go hand in hand. He brings in the gods and goddesses like *kālarātri,* Bhairavi and Bhairav who are mentioned in tantric texts and collates the model of parallel creation and dissolution. He also proposes the concept of multiverse at this stage. He makes the strange revelations that both he and Rama were born several times and that Rama was vanquished by Ravan in one of the universes.

At the same time he denies everything from the Absolute standpoint and negates any creation. Extending this argument, he describes the series of creations on the same lines as he described the series of dissolutions earlier.

After a long pedantic discourse, he refers back again to the Story of Hard Rock. The establishes that both creation and dissolution arise from ignorance and what truly exists is only the unchanging Supreme Brahman. He discloses that the gross body he had at that time was dropped and he does not possess any physical

body. He says that he appears to his disciples depending on the residual karma of the students.

What exactly is "ignorance" was partly explained by the Story of Sage Gadhi discussed in Yoga Vasishta, Book 5, Upasama Prakarana, the chapter on 'The Calm Down'. In order to explain ignorance in greater detail, he introduces the lengthy story of King Vipaschit. It has several sub-stories built into it — King Vipaschit's desire to find out the end of ignorance; his turning into four Vipaschit-s by the grace of God of Fire; his travels in the four directions; one of the Vipaschit-s being born as a deer, becoming a human being in the Court of Dasarath and reminiscing on his past lives; the story of the demon who under the curse of a Saint drops dead onto the earth as a huge corpse; the individual in that corpse being reborn as a mosquito, deer and hunter; the hunter becoming the disciple to a Maharishi and pursuing Yoga; a description of the yogic methods of body-swapping; utilization of these techniques to establish the unreality of the three states – awake, dream and deep sleep worlds and the concepts of Macrocosm and unreality of the world; the future story of the hunter's Guru; the future story of the hunter to be born as the King Sindh within the Story of Leela; the past Story of King Vipaschit being born as a deer; and proving the non-existence of ignorance and declaring it to be Brahman.

These sub-stories in fact constitute the central theme of Yoga Vasishta, Book 7, Nirvana Prakarana, Uttrārdha, Chapter on Liberation. Elaborate discussions on various practices to be observed precede and follow each of the above stories. While summing up, Sage Vasishta teaches the methods of conquering the senses and says that the three states of awake, dream and deep sleep are actually intermixed.

Sage Vasistha illustrates how the perspective of the spiritual seeker gets transformed depending on the level of clarity he attains in understanding the Truth. The quintessence of the entire Yoga Vasishta, Book 7, Nirvana Prakarana, Uttrārdha, Chapter on Liberation is captured well in the following verse:

देशाद्देशान्तरप्राप्तौ विद्धि मध्यमसंविदः ।
जगदित्यपरं नाम स्वरूपादच्युतात्मनः ।।

deśāddeśāntaraprāptau viddhi madhyamasaṃvidaḥ |
jagadityaparaṃ nāma svarūpādacyutātmanaḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 171, Sloka 23

Sage Vasishta explains: "We discussed previously Consciousness-space during the story of Leela in the Chapter: Creation. I defined it as the intermittent substance that is present in-between two objects, when the thought wave of the mind travels from one object to another. This is the instruction given to Leela who was in a state of ignorance. The perspective of a *jīvanmukta* is different. From his viewpoint the space in-between two objects when his mental wave (thought) travels from one object to the other is the "world." This difference in perspective arises because a

jīvanmukta never shifts from his original position of Consciousness-Self. Hence he experiences only Brahman irrespective of which way his thought wave travels. He does not see two separate substances — a world and Brahman. These are just two names for the same thing in his view. We talk of the world sometimes as an illusion and some other times as Brahman.

If you are a seeker and are trying to understand Brahman, begin considering the world as a fantasy. Try to unite with the worldless Brahman. If you look back after the attainment of Self-realization, the world will still appear, provided there is some remnant tendency of past karma left in you to show a world. Even then, the world appears as Brahman."

The story of Kundadanta occupies the second most important position in Yoga Vasishta, Book 7, Nirvana Prakarana, Uttrārdha, Chapter on Liberation. It is, though, old wine in a new bottle. It is created by knitting together selected events from the stories of Leela, Lavana, Indava and Chūdāla discussed in the earlier chapters. Nevertheless, the Story of Kundadanta attains a dazzling shine in the skillful hands of the Sage. It exemplifies how a rigorous study of this noble scripture, Yoga Vasishta, leads the spiritual aspirant to Self-Knowledge.

Winding up his instructions, Sage Vasishta reiterates his teaching and says that it is futile to involve in dry debates based on theoretical concepts. He declares the study of scriptures by seekers desiring Self-Knowledge as equivalent to finding a valuable wish-fulfilling gemstone, Chintamani, by the lumberjacks.

While he himself shows exemplary humility and politeness in the scene where he is worshipped by the entire gathering in Dasarath's Court at the culmination of his sermon, Sage Vasishta does not hesitate to ask Rama how he (Rama) feels when he (Rama) is showered with flowers from the Heavens.

Sage Valmiki even after such a marathon narration, characteristically once again, extends the text beyond this point with a question-answer dialog between Rama and Sage Vasishta for a length of ten Sargas. He alludes to the Story of King Prajnapti and a previous life of Rama. Rama is shown to have been Sage Vasishta's student in his previous life also.

Sage Valmiki recalls the names of all the Sages including himself and Bharadwaja, Agastya, Sutishna, Aristanemi, Agnivesya, Karunya and other Maharishis who were referred to by him at the beginning of the first Chapter: Vairagya (Renunciation) and closes the text with reverential salutation to the Supreme Brahman.

The style adopted by Sage Valmiki makes it clear to us that whatever he discussed in this voluminous scripture was in strict accordance with the Vedic declarations. The concluding sloka of this outstanding text is typically rich with sentences taken directly from Vedas.

यत्सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म तज्जलानिति च स्फुटम् ।
श्रुत्वा ह्युदीर्यते साम्नि तस्मै ब्रह्मात्मने नमः ।।

yatsarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma tajjalāniti ca sphuṭam |
śrutvā hyudīryate sāmni tasmai brahmātmane namaḥ ||

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha, Sarga 216, Sloka 25

(Meaning: The entire visible world is Supreme Brahman (because all of this is born from the Supreme Brahman, it is sustained by Brahman and it dissolves into Brahman). Therefore, a spiritual aspirant should pursue Self-inquiry in peace with the thought that he is himself that Brahman. Salutations to myself who is thus established to be none other than Brahman! Salutations to me who is a solidification of Consciousness-Bliss!)

82. Chapterwise Reviews

Yoga Vasishta is an elaborate and deeply profound ancient text presenting the incommunicable and abstruse Advaita Knowledge in all its multiple nuances. It is full of long meandering discourses teasing out the ineffable Truth from the complex jungle of arguments and misleading standpoints. An unprepared reader may easily get lost in the bewildering maze of maddeningly dense and marathon discussions that take place between various characters, either fictitious or real. Hence, during the course of the six volumes prepared by us, we tried to periodically refresh the reader recapitulating the linkages in the stories and providing annotation to the philosophical viewpoint. We had also presented summaries of the topics discussed at the end of each chapter.

We give here at one place a quick review of the six chapters so that a comprehensive view of the entire text can be obtained in all its glory and beauty.

82.1 Review Of Vairagya Prakarana (Chapter: Detachment)

Yoga Vasishta, the masterwork of Sage Valmiki, consists of six chapters.

1. *vairagya prakaraṇa* (Chapter on Detachment) (Book 1) ;
2. *mumukśu vyavahāra prakaraṇa* (Chapter on The Conduct of a Spiritual Aspirant) (Book 2) ;
3. *utpatti prakaraṇa* (Chapter on Origination) (Book 3) ;
4. *sthiti prakaraṇa* (Chapter on Sustenance) (Book 4) ;
5. *upasama prakaraṇa* (Chapter on The Calm Down) (Book 5) ; and
6. *nirvāna prakaraṇa* - purvārdha and uttarārdha (Chapter on Liberation) (Book 6 and Book 7)

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The first two Chapters (Books 1 and 2) are of a preparatory nature introducing the prior requirements and eligibility criteria for an ardent disciple of Vedanta. The actual teaching of Advaita philosophy begins from the third chapter: Origination (Book 3).

A deep and dedicated study of Advaita is not an easy task; it is very much unlike reading a short story or a novel. In order to be able to fully grasp the essence of the teaching, it is essential that the reader should have a serene dispassionate mind and total detachment. Sage Valmiki, appropriately enough, starts this magnificent work with a Chapter on Detachment (*vairagya prakaraṇa* - Book 1). The chapter informs us, the ordinary readers, what exactly constitutes relinquishment. It also serves to substantiate the fact that Lord Sri Rama, the principal student to whom the whole exposition is addressed, is already well qualified for the study having attained a stable and unpretentious detachment. The first chapter gives the overall scheme of presentation also in addition to introducing a few of the important technical terms.

The structure of any major scriptural text is built around Four Principal Components. These components are:

i) What is the objective of the text? (Subject matter)
ii) Who is the targeted audience? (Eligible readers)
iii) How is the present text related to the actual subject of discussion? (Relationship)
iv) What is the expected outcome of the present text? (Usefulness)

Sage Valmiki answers the above questions in detail in the first chapter following the style of the day befitting a book of this kind. The Sage indicates that "Exemplification of the Ways and Means for Redemption of Sorrow" to be the principal aim of his work through the Story of Bharadwaj, narrated at the beginning of the first Chapter (*vairagya prakaraṇa* - Book 1) .

The Stories of *Arishtanemi, Karunyakumara and Sutīkśna* come up next. These stories illustrate the eligibility requirements of the reader who can be benefited by the text.

The Sage clearly says that

नात्यन्तमज्ञो नोतग्नः सोस्मिन शस्त्राधिकारवान

nātyantamajño notagnaḥ sosmina śastrādhikāravān

(Meaning: This tome is addressed to a reader who is neither too ignorant nor fully enlightened (a *jnāni*)).

The Sage establishes the relationship between the text of the book and the main objective of the work through the Stories of the Four Curses on Lord Vishnu. He mentions that Rama being young failed to remember his true Self because of ignorance for a period of twelve years. He was overcome by ignorance because of a curse given by Sanatkumara. Rama though young could, however, develop detachment propelled by his innate Satva quality.

The detachment in turn helped him begin an inquiry into the reality of the objective world. Rama, on the other hand, obtained eligibility to receive Self-Knowledge because of the increasing detachment which developed in him from an inquiry into the objective world. These contrasting stories provided a golden opportunity to the author to explicate in detail the importance of detachment and dispassion which form the bedrock for a study of Vedanta. The connection between the text and the objective of the work gets thus validated.

Sage Valmiki portrays, through the dialog between Rama and the Sage Viswamitra, that there is nothing worthy to be craved for in the world after closely examining every aspect of life. Thereby the Sage steers the reader to the path of renunciation. He exhorts the readers to take a critical look at the shortcomings in worldly matters like wealth, longevity, egotism, mind, want, body, the various stages of life like boyhood, youth and senescence, time, and so on. He encourages the readers to cultivate strong detachment by routinely examining the defects in worldly matters.

The first chapter comes to a close with revered Sage Narada persuading both the Sages Vasishta and Viswamitra to inculcate Self-Knowledge to Rama in whom the Sage Narada observed an intense yearning for Liberation and a total disinterest in the enjoyment of life either here or in the next worlds.

82.2 Review Of Mumukshu Vyvahara Prakrana (Chapter: Conduct of a Spiritual Aspirant)

Every scriptural text on Vedanta prescribes the attainment of the Fourfold Aids of Seeking as a necessary pre-qualification before one takes up a study of Self-Knowledge. Yogavaasishta too stresses this aspect in its own style in the first chapter. Intense yearning for Liberation is the final reach of the Fourfold Aids of Seeking. Spiritual aspirants reach this level adopting different paths from a variety of approaches. Because of this, the seekers may often face some confusion or sometimes be unsure of themselves about leading their life in the world. “What is the code of conduct for spiritual aspirants? How should they live the balance of their life in the pursuit of Self-Knowledge?” are some of the questions that torment them. Books on Vedanta do not normally deal with these problems. Sage Valmiki**,** out of compassion to the ordinary folk, devotes an entire chapter on these issues.

The Sage opens the second chapter with the dialogues between Suka and Vyasa and Suka and Janaka in order to show the wide variety of ways and means available for attaining Liberation. The sum and substance of these discussions is succinctly expressed by him as,

स्वसन्कल्प व साद्बद्धो निस्सन्कल्पस्च मुच्यते

svasankalpa va sādbaddho nissankalpasca mucyate

(Meaning: Thoughts engender bondage and thoughtlessness is Liberation).

The above statement is the bottom line of Vedanta. But it happens to come so early in the text because it is a teaching given by the Sage Viswamitra.

Spurred by the words of Sage Narada, Sage Viswamitra enthusiastically initiates the teaching. But later on, he realizes that the discourse has not been proceeding in any specific pattern. So he requests Sage Vasishta to impart the instruction to Rama. From then on Sage Vasishta takes over the discourse.

Sage Vasishta goes according to a well structured program of teaching and delivers his sermon in a methodical way. To start with, he introduces the terms like the ordinary open space (one among the five elements (*bhūtākāsa*), the Space of the Mind (*manasa akāsa*) and the space of Consciousness (*chidakāsa)* and defines them. He emphasizes the importance of "Practice" (*sādhana*) in acquiring Self-Knowledge. He later introduces the technical jargon and the basic concepts of Vedanta.

The Sage demolishes the argument of the lazy that desire for liberation too depends on Grace. He devotes several sargas (cantos) in this chapter on this issue. In this context, he discusses the life-stories of many great Sages and *jīvanmuktas* like: Vyasa, Suka, Viswamitra, Vasishta. He expounds in detail the four aids of seeking viz., control of sense organs (*sama*), Self-inquiry (*ātma vicāra*), Happiness (*santośa*) and Association with noble people (*sat sāngatya*). He recommends the triumvirate processes of good conduct, association with noble people and study of scriptures as a means to achieve them.

The Sage introduces at this stage novel terminology of Knowledge-wave, Mental-wave and Sensory-wave to impress that the world is made up of movement. Thereby he condemns indolence that acts as an antagonist to the effort of seeking. He proves that the invisible fate is like an open space and he exhorts the seeker to make every effort to get rid of undesirable tendencies. He commends good demeanor to be the way to be adopted.

In order to inspire the seeker to lay full faith on Self-Knowledge, Sage Vasishta gives a comprehensive description of the evolutionary process of Knowledge from Brahman up to himself. It serves as a curtain raiser to the actual teaching of the Self-knowledge. He introduces the reality of the inescapable "Principle of Natural Law", (*niyati*) a truth which he will be repeatedly referring to in his future sermons.

The Sage once again refers to the four aids of seeking he made a mention of earlier and compares them to the security guards of a Royal palace. He says that if the seeker catches hold of any one of them, the remaining three automatically fall in line. He indirectly urges the seeker to follow Listening to scriptures (*shravana*), to reflect on what is heard (*manana*) and to take up contemplative meditation (*nididhyāsanā*) while pointing out the significant role that control of sense organs and Self-inquiry

play in the process.

Sage Valmiki, at this point, depicts the structure and format (the division into different chapters, the number of verses) he followed in his book in terms of the scheme of discourses adopted by the Sage Vasishta. The discussions take a turn to actual Vedanta from here. As an intro to his discourse, the Sage discusses the illusory nature of the world and puts forth a strange proposition that in every subatomic particle lie thousands of worlds. He provides a few details of this concept here but says that a more elaborate presentation will come up later on in the final chapter. He follows up with another queer suggestion that the wakeful state is no different from that of the dream state. He takes this opportunity to discuss some more theoretical considerations like what constitutes a true means to knowledge, what is a metaphor, what is the reality of the dream world (*prātibhāsika sattā*), what is the reality of the transactional world (*vyāvahārika sattā*) and so on. The Sage states that in his view only immediate direct evidence is admissible:

प्रमाणमेकमेवेह प्रत्यक्षं *pramāṇamekameveha pratyakṣaṃ*

He further explains what is acceptable immediate evidence.

Continuing his arguments, the Sage establishes that the visible world is a changeless change (*Vivarta*) of the Supreme Brahman.

Before concluding the chapter, the Sage recalls his instruction addressed to a spiritual aspirant. He underlines that it is necessary for a serious seeker to listen again and again to the teachings of a competent teacher until the truth of it sinks in him fully and is able to realize it experientially.

82.3. Review of Utpatti Prakarana (Chapter: Origination)

The actual subject matter of Yogavaasishta comes up in the third chapter. The entire discussion in the text is structured based on the following mantra from the Taittiriya Upanishad:

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । येन जातानि जीवन्ति ।
यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति । तद्विजिज्ञासस्व । तद्ब्रह्मेति ।

yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante | yena jātāni jīvanti |
yatprayantyabhisaṃviśanti | tadvijijñāsasva | tadbrahmeti |

Creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world are critically examined in that order following this mantra. The third chapter, accordingly, is on Creation.

The ultimate objective of the chapter is to establish that the origination of the visible world has no tenable basis by proving that space-time themselves lack authentic "Beingness." The Sage bases his argument on the maxim that our wakeful world is the dream world for the creator, Hiranyagarbha. This would then imply that "I am a dream character appearing in the dream of another individual." But it is hard

for us to accept such a proposition. In order to attest this counterintuitive statement,

Sage Vasishta narrates a number of stories in addition to very exhaustive discussions. The principal story of this chapter is that of Leela. The other illustrative stories in this chapter are those of: Karkati or The Acicular Demon; Indava; Fictitious Indra and Ahalya; Lavana and others.

The Story of Leela extends to 46 sargas (cantos) preceded by 14 sargas that introduce the story and its background. The 13th sarga contains the key message of the story. A review of the contents of this chapter was done in the text itself. Sage Vasishta describes the gradual evolution of the bonded creatures from the Supreme Self in his introduction to the story. The Story of Leela is a dramatized presentation of the evolutionary process.

Sage Vasishta usually reveals upfront what he intends to teach through the story that he narrates. He recapitulates the take home message of the story at its end. But he somehow manages to create the impression that there is a difference in the prologue and the concluding summary. He leaves it to the intelligence of the reader to infer the convergence between the opening intro and the epilog of the story. As an aid however, he explains clearly the technical issues in the story. We have, therefore, included in the Part II of our Series our own Analysis of Leela's story. We have also given the Analysis by Sage Vasishta. In addition, the twists and turns in the dialog between Leela and Goddess Saraswati were also reviewed by us briefly for the same reason. The wakeful world, dream world and imaginary worlds are compared and contrasted in these summaries.

The villain in the Story of Leela is the King Sindh. A description of the King's past lives is going to be discussed in the second part of the last Chapter: Nirvana. But Sage Vasishta does not make any mention of this fact here because his primary focus at this stage centers upon two main issues.

These are that:
i) Infinite number of worlds exist inside a subatomic particle; and
ii) Eons and Eons of time periods exist within a moment.

Such a situation is possible only if the world happens to be a mere phantasm. Illusion can emanate from an imagination by the mind. The Sage further amplifies the meaning of this in the Story of Karkati, the Acicular Demon. The story of Karkati talks of an individual who is endowed with a normal body but later gets a colossal body and further on a needle sized body within one single life.

We discussed the inner meaning of these developments in our review of the Story of Karkati. It is said that the Demon Karkati obtained the diverse bodies by the sheer power of her imagination. A doubt will naturally arise on the credibility of such a story. To answer such a doubt, Sage Vasishta tells the Story of Indava-s.

Ten brothers of the Indava family observe intense austerities and meditation

to transform themselves as Creators (Brahma-s). Using the powers obtained by them, each of them creates multiple universes in accordance with their fancy. Sage Vasishta repeatedly alludes to this story in his dialogs with Rama.

Though it does not have much meat as a story, it enjoys an unparalleled importance in Sage Vasishta's teaching because of the message it conveys. The story is told to prove how an individual can not only obtain several bodies for oneself but also create an infinite number of worlds by the power of his imagination.

Additionally, it shows that the entire world we see is nothing but the imagination of the creator, Hiranyagarbha.

The Sage tells the story of a lustful couple by the names of Indra and Ahalya immediately following the powerful story of the strong minded Indava-s. By the strength of their desire, this couple takes birth, a number of times, as husband and wife. These two contrasting stories juxtaposed with each other establish the power of imagination.

The Sage next describes how the imaginative powers of individuals differ depending on the makeup of their bodies by classifying people into 14 groups based on their physical bodies. We presented a flow chart of the deep logic within the lengthy arguments that took place at this juncture in Part II of our Series on Yoga Vasishta. The Sage himself summarized the crux of the elaborate discussions in the section titled "Termination of Action or Annihilation of the Mind is adequate."

In this context the Sage gives an in depth explanation of 'What is Mind and its nature' using 15 names that describe its qualities. He further illustrates his presentation with two short stories: The story of the Mind and The story of the Child. As an icing on the cake he embellishes the talk on the mind with another story called The Story of Lavana.

Lavana's story is narrated in three parts with theoretical discussions in-between the parts. We included a brief review of this story, in Part II of the series on Yoga Vasishta.

The Sage sets the stage through the story of Lavana that the world is no more than a magic show, to The Story of Gadhi that he will introduce in the next chapter. He will discuss in it the intricacies of the dream and fantasy worlds and contrasts them with Reality. Thus the Chapter: Creation comes to an end.

82.4 Review Of Sthiti Prakarana (Chapter: Sustenance)

It is generally accepted that there are six types of changes, labeled "Six fold change", for any substance in the world. The six changes are:

1. Birth – *jāyate.*
2. Existence – *asti.*
3. Development – *vardhate.*
4. Modification – *viparinamate.*
5. Decline – *apakśīyate.*
6. Death - *vinasyati.*

The inevitability of the six types of changes can be grasped well with the following example. Let us say there is a flower on a plant in farmland. The next day, it dried up and there was a small bulge at the stalk. The farmer who observes it would gleefully express, "Fruit is being born." This is *jāyate*.

After a few days, the raw fruit would appear. The farmer will say, "Tender fruit is there." This is *asti*.

As the farmer keeps observing it, the fruit grows to full size. This is *vardhate*.

The growth stops after some days and it slowly matures and ripens. Its phase changes. This is *viparinamate*.

After a few more days, it dries up and shrinks. This is *apakśīyate*. Finally one day, it drops down. That is *vinasyati*.

Though not apparent as clearly as depicted in the above example, every substance in the world necessarily goes through the six changes. More commonly the states of birth (*jāyate*) and death (*vinasyati*) are recognized. It is a general practice to club together the intermittent four stages and refer to them by one word – *sthiti* or sustenance. Sage Vasishta also used the word *sthiti* in this sense.

In this world, there cannot be sustenance for a substance unless it is born. When once it is dead or destroyed, there is no sustenance for it back again. Everyone believes this strongly to be a fact. How far is this belief justified? Sage Vasishta dealt with this topic in this Chapter.

In the last chapter on Creation (Utpatti)), Vasishta established that the world was not created at all. When something was not created, there cannot be sustenance (*sthiti*) for it. When there is no sustenance, what is there to be discussed ? To answer this question, he opened the Chapter on Sustenance with "*Bhargava upakhyāna*."

In that story, Sukra was in a deep penance on a hill slope at some place on the earth. At that time, he experienced joys in heaven with a second body. When was the second body born? As a matter of fact, it was never born. *Jayate* is not applicable to it. It started with existence (*asti*). Sustenance continued from then on. Is this condition like a dream or magic? We cannot say so. The second body sustained

several births and deaths. At the end, Sukra entered back into his old body with the help of the teachings of the God of Death and burnt the second body**.** That means, the second body started with *asti*, crossed the phases of *vardhate*, *viparinamate*, *apakśīyate* and then ended (reached the final phase viz. *vinasyati*). However, in the meanwhile, his original body stayed at the *asti* stage. This implies that Sukra got back into sustenance even after the sixth phase of death. How could this be possible? Intellectuals have to delve on this puzzle.

Vedantins (Philosophers) usually cite the experience of a dream, magic or fantasy to show that the world is unreal and illusory. Sometimes seeker disciples get tired of the very same examples quoted to illustrate the illusory nature. Sage Vasishta circumvented that ennui narrating to Sri Rama, as an example, an event that actually took place at the time of the beginning of the Kalpa. Vasishta said that at the start of the Kalpa, when it opened with Krita Yuga, a variety of very strange creatures were born. One of such strange living beings was Sukra. The example given by Vasishta was the life history of Sukra.

Through the story of Sukra, he focused the spotlight honing onto a strange situation and provided an enlarged view for clarity. That is sustenance (*sthiti*) without birth. The sustenance continues even after *vinasyati* – death. What shall we call sustenance when it lacks both the beginning and the end? It has to be an illusion. There is no other way. The essence of the entire Chapter on *stithi* (Sustenance) is reflected in this story.

But the questions continue! How can such a condition exist? How does it occur? These doubts trouble any disciple.

In answer to these questions, Sage Vasishta narrated "*dāma vyāla kata upākhyāna*." This story is an allegory and we discussed in detail the inner meaning in the text. The snake (*vyāla*) got sustenance on the rope. But the same threads woven together in another way gave sustenance to a mat (*kata*). This was illustrated in the "*dāma vyāla kata upākhyāna.*" Vasishta did not cook up the story. It was a true event. Even here he described sustenance without birth. But it was a dependent sustenance. *dāma, vyāla and kata*'s sustenance was dependent on Sambara. Likewise the sustenance of *bhīma, bhāsa and dhrida* too depended on Sambara. But Sage Vasishta did not focus on the continuation of sustenance after death. How long can sustenance that was not preceded by birth continue? When does it annihilate? How does it annihilate? These were the questions he concentrated on.

That is the reason that he told Sri Rama in the discourse after the presentation of the story:

कुतो जातेयमिति ते राम मास्तु विचारणा
इमां कथमहं हन्मीत्येषा तेऽस्तु विचारणा

kuto jāteyamiti te rāma māstu vicāraṇā
imāṃ kathamahaṃ hanmītyeṣā te'stu vicāraṇā

Sthiti Prakarana, Sarga 41, Sloka 31-32

"Rama! Don't worry yourself with questions like wherefrom did this illusion originate? Or Why did it originate? Or How? The only question you have to inquire into is 'How am I to get rid of it?'."

As a clue, he said through Yamadharma raja's words that *dāma, vyāla and kata* had to know their entire life history if they had to be free of their sorrows. By "To know their entire life history" it is meant that their sustenance was actually dependent on 'Sambara' (they did not have independent *sthiti*) and because they forgot about that fact, they had to go through so many births and deaths!

Okay, *dāma, vyāla and kata* were dependent on Sambara for their sustenance. What about us, the ordinary folk ? Our sustenance depends on the "Root Nescience" or in other words, ignorance. If we understand this much, it is enough, ignorance will be gone. We become free of the bondage of this world. That was the central point conveyed by Sage Vasishta in *dāma, vyāla and kata* story.

The Sage spent considerable time in the discourse that followed the story on the issue of calming down the mind. It amounts to the same thing whether we say the mind has calmed down or ignorance has disappeared. The route is Self-inquiry. To emphasize the point, Sage Vasishta portrayed "*kadamba dāsura upakhyana*."

Kadamba *dāsura* is a peculiar name! It is derived from Sanskrit:

खं वायुं दमयतीति कादम्बः *khaṃ vāyuṃ damayatīti kādambaḥ*

Kadamba means one which controls the group of diseases based on *vāta* (*vāta* can be approximately expressed as bodily imbalance of gases). It refers to Anthocephelus Kadamba tree. That is the usual grammatical meaning. The sense it is used in this Chapter comes from another interpretation. *vāta* means the air we breathe. *Kadamba* means the one who controls the breath through *pranāyama*.

चले वाते चलम् चित्तं - निश्चले निशलं भवेत्

cale vāte calam cittaṃ - niścale niśalaṃ bhavet

is a saying in Yoga science. It means that if breath moves in a man, his mind moves too. If the breath stops, the mind becomes still !

Because *ḍāsura* was a person who achieved an unperturbed state of the mind, he was Kadamba *ḍāsura*. In the story, he was seated on the top of the Kadamba tree, which is the cure for gas imbalance problems.

The word D*āsura* also has a special meaning. The poet used it with a little

bit of a twist. "*Dasa dane*" is the root word in Sanskrit. *dāsah* means to give alms (gifts). Based on this root word, Vishnu got the name as "*dāsārha*." In the thousand names used for the worship of Vishnu, one word is **"दाशार्ह सात्वतां पतिः"** "*dāśārha sātvatāṃ patiḥ* ". One who is adept at giving alms is "*dāsasura*" or "*dāsura*." What is meant by alms ? To give away what one has amounts to giving alms. Another word for giving alms is sacrifice. Renunciation is yet another word. The hero of the story, Daasura was also a great giver. He renounced anger too along with desire! He did not get angry when the forest damsel requested him to bestow children. Nor was he aroused sensually. *Dāsura* was a true renouncer, an adept giver !

Of all knowledge, knowledge of Brahman is the most supreme. Imparting knowledge too is giving alms! *dāsura* had become a great giver by teaching skillfully Self-knowledge through simple stories. The fact that Vasishta himself appreciated in the last part of the story, the way *dāsura* gave away the knowledge was already mentioned in the text.

Though Sage Vasishta presented the story of *dāsura* sitting at the tip of a tree where sustenance was not possible, he did not emphasize the point about sustenance as it was already mentioned twice. He focused, instead, on the illusory nature of the world and on the methods to be adopted by a seeker to get rid of ignorance and to obtain annihilation of mind.

In order to prove that such experience of being free from ignorance is truly possible for noble men, Vasishta talked about Kacha, son of Brihaspati. He then described the state of the world in terms of the three *guna*s. By inculcating the *Sattva guna*, into the mind, he advised to annihilate the mind and arrive at a state of sorrowlessness. With these words, he closed the Chapter. The next Chapter on Dissolution was then taken up.

We too shall follow Sage Vasishta into the next Yoga Vasishta, Book 5, Upasama Prakarana, the Chapter on The Calm Down after once again reviewing thoroughly within ourselves the events depicted in the stories and thinking over the points made out in this short summary.

82.5 Review Of Upasama Prakarana (Chapter: The Calm Down)

The arrangement of Chapters in Yoga Vasishta corresponds to the Vedic dictum,

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । येन जातानि जीवन्ति ।

yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante | yena jātāni jīvanti |

After an initial Introductory comes the Chapter on Creation. Next comes the Chapter on Sustenance. The Chapter on Creation deals with the origination of the Universe. The Chapter on Sustenance deals with how the Universe is sustained.

The above quoted Vedic statement goes on to say:

यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति ।

yatprayantyabhisaṃviśanti |

(meaning that into which the Universe merges).

Therefore, the Chapter coming after Sustenance has to discuss dissolution of the Universe. But the world will not disappear as long as the mind exists. This was stated at the beginning of this Chapter itself. Therefore, it is necessary to end the mind first in order to end the universe. Accordingly, Sage Vasishta's teaching in this Chapter comprises an elaborate exposition on the ways and means of ending the mind.

An explanation of the theoretical underpinning of the subject matter, Philosophical Wisdom, was completed with the Chapter on Sustenance. What remained to be covered was a discussion on the methods of nulling the mind. Hence, Sage Vasishta began the current Chapter saying that "What originated and what grew up was nothing but mind."

Sage Vasishta later discussed the issue of "Non-doership." He followed it by spelling out suitable techniques for the liberation of individuals with *Satvic* and *Rajasic* qualities. He narrated in this context the story of Janaka and the Saintly Songs to illustrate how a person might get liberated even without a Guru. Liberation could come about like a bolt from the blue suddenly triggered by strange unexpected events owing to the meritorious deeds in past lives. As per this story, Janaka, King of Videha, heard some songs sung by a few holy saints while he was on a casual stroll. The songs kick-started several thoughts in him and finally led him to liberation.

Sage Vasista then explained what was mind. He said that there were two methods of getting rid of past impressions. They were "Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions", and "Wisdom-based Eradication of Impressions." He added that the former was applicable to a *jīvanmukta* and the latter to the person who was liberated without the body.

The sage said that every individual was related to every other in this world in some birth or the other. He added that it was unwise to limit our relationships only to a few people known to us in this birth. He told the story of "Punya and Paavana" as an example. Strictly speaking, there was not much of a story in it. Sage Vasishta depicted the philosophical and contemplative dialogue of two holy and austere brothers who all of a sudden lost their parents. He established through this story that an ability to think beyond, transcending the immediate relationships, constituted a valid tool for achieving liberation.

It is also possible for an individual to achieve Self-realization spurred unexpectedly by one's own introspective thoughts on Self duly strengthened by timely instructions of a Guru. In support of this, Sage Vasishta described in detail how Emperor Bali went about in his thinking and how his Guru, Sukracharya helped him.

Worship of a beloved deity too could help in achieving Self-realization. This point was illustrated through the phase of Prahlada's life subsequent to the appearance of Lord Nrisimha.

Sage Vasishta dealt principally with philosophical issues in the story of Emperor Bali. He expounded on the subtle relationship between devotional and philosophical approaches in the story of Prahlada. He described at this point the procedures to be followed by idol worshippers. He advised that they should perform their prayer with the concept of "I am He." He propounded that the existence of wicked creatures was necessary for the betterment of human beings who would have to achieve liberation.

Sage Vasishta later described how worshipping a form with attributes would lead to the worship of an entity without attributes, which in turn would lead to pure Knowledge. Pure Knowledge would help one to experience the unchanging Self.

After an elegant narration through several tasteful stories about the methods a seeker could adopt, Sage Vasishta finally took up a discussion of the phenomenal world, an illusion (*māya*) that every seeker would like to cross through the different methods of practice. The story of Sage Gādhi is central to this discussion and happens to be the primary focus of the current chapter.

Sage Gādhi went into a stupor for a brief while during his bath in a pond. During that swoon he dreamed that he was born as a tribal, became a king in the later part of his life and ruled over a vast empire, and finally committed suicide under unavoidable circumstances by jumping into funeral pyre. He saw 80 years of his life during that trance, though he might not have fainted for more than a handful of minutes in the pond! He was surprised how he could witness 80 years of dream life within those few minutes. However, he did not pay much attention to it, as it was merely a fantasy. He resumed his normal routine life.

But then, beyond all his expectations, Gādhi happened to notice his dream kingdom and country in the real world. Every one in that kingdom attested the fact that a tribal king ruled the land until recently and the king committed suicide. Gādhi could not make any sense of his dreamland appearing now in real life. Nor could he understand how real people were able to provide evidence of what he saw in his fantasy. He thought over the matter considerably. Unable to comprehend the meaning of it all, he prayed to Lord Vishnu.

Lord Vishnu appeared before Gādhi. The Lord explained the mental processes of perception (*rupāloka kāla*), anticipation (*manaskara kāla*) and remembrance (tattā kāla) in terms of Present, Future and Past Time Periods.

Spicing up his talk with intricate logic, He established that everything that Gādhi had done was entirely imaginary – whether it was the dream of himself being the king or his personal visit to that kingdom in his so-called wakeful state.

Gādhi could not believe his ears. So he went back to that kingdom on a

second visit. He was bewildered to see physically once again everything that he witnessed in his dream. Unable to understand how things could physically appear a second time if it was merely a dream, he prayed to Lord Vishnu again. Lord Vishnu said that it was possible for several people to witness the same dream together.

The Lord told Gādhi that he and the people of Kīra kingdom were experiencing the same hallucination simultaneously. Thus speaking, he disappeared.

Unable to grasp the issues, Sage Gādhi resumed deep meditation. Lord Vishnu appeared before him once again. Lord Vishnu indicated this time that past events could appear as current on-going events for a person suffering from hallucinations. He further told Gādhi that Gādhi's mind remembered the story of a tribal individual. It (his mind) did not stop there. It identified Gādhi's personality with the tribal. Even though Gādhi was intellectually convinced of this fact, an experiential understanding was missing. Lord Vishnu observed that it was the very nature of the deceitful mind. So the Lord exhorted Gādhi to perform austerities and purify his mind to be able to grasp the Truth. Accordingly, Sage Gādhi went into deep meditation, overcame the illusory phenomena and realized Self.

Thus ended the life-story of Gādhi in brief. We may recall that two worlds –one real and the other virtual – appeared to an individual in one of the stories (The Story of Leela) in the Chapter on Creation. In that chapter, there was also the story of King Lavana witnessing in real life the very same world he saw in dream. In the next Chapter on Sustenance, we were told in the story of Bhargava that Sukra burnt his own body. Gadhi's story is an amalgamation of these three stories.

Sage Vasishta attributed the ability of Queen Leela to see a real and a reflected imaginary world to the power of a boon granted by Goddess Saraswati. He called it a trick of the magician dispatched by Indra when King Lavana happened to witness in a dream an actual event that had taken place in a forest. The events described in the story of Bhargava were credited to the austerities performed by himself. Yet, Lord Vishnu appeared three times in Gādhi's story and gave three different reasons for what happened to Gādhi. The Lord initially emphasized that not only Gādhi becoming a king as a tribal, but his actual visits later on to the kingdom were also parts of the same dream. Second time around, Lord Vishnu said that Gādhi and the people of Kīra kingdom had the identical fanciful visions simultaneously. During His third appearance, the Lord indicated that a past event that had had occurred elsewhere had infected Gadhi's mind as a meme due to the deceitful nature of mind. He advised him to perform strict austerities to purify his mind.

Gādhi being a pious and austere person did not doubt Lord Vishnu nor did he feel that the Lord was shifting His stand each time. Gadhi tried his best to understand the message given by Vishnu. Gādhi was not aided by any special powers due to Saraswati or Indra as was the case in the earlier stories.

Gādhi was an ordinary seeker like any one of us. A seeker has to understand what illusion (*māya*) is. Sage Vasishta wanted to convey that intelligence necessary in comprehending illusory phenomena could not be obtained by any boons. Therefore, he invoked Lord Vishnu repeatedly in the story and made him say that deep meditation should be practiced not for attainment of special boons but for purification of the mind, in order to disinfect the mind of all memes.

Gādhi could see the purport of Lord Vishnu's responses due to his austerities and meditation. Normally we believe that wakeful part of our life as reality and the part that goes in dreams as untrue. We are unable to experience Truth because such a belief is unfounded. That is why Sage Vasishta made Lord Vishnu to explain to Gādhi in these words: "The entire lot of your experiences, including your visit to the kingdom of the tribal king is a mere phantasm." But Gādhi could not immediately grasp the significance of this statement. So Lord Vishnu conveyed the same message in different words a second time: "You as well as the people of the tribal kingdom are conceiving the world as reality. This is a fantasy everybody has been collectively experiencing. Please understand that every experience in the world is imaginary!"

Still, Gādhi could not make any sense of it. The Lord explained for the third time around with the words: "The root cause for illusion lies in the fact that you think that your body is yourself, though you are different from your body. Because of this you considered yourself as the tribal king, though you were not." Gādhi felt he could understand intellectually but not experientially. He was in a confused state. The Lord suggested that Gādhi should purify his mind to come out of the befuddled state.

Though Gādhi's story is thus seemingly a bit of a repetition, Sage Vasishta skillfully presented an amalgamation of the message from the earlier three stories – Leela, Lavana and Bhargava Upakhyanas. Sage Vasishta establishes through the story that our so-called daily world is such a phantasm. Using an ordinary person devoid of any special powers viz. Gādhi as the lead character, conveys that it is applicable to every normal human being like us. He named the characters in these stories too befittingly as was in the main part of the text.

The focus of the Chapter on The Calm Down is Gādhi 's story from which it emerges that performance of austerities and deep meditation are the only cure for the disease of illusion. Sage Vasishta indicated further that dissolving the mind was true meditation. He described exhaustively the method of meditation on AUM through Uddālaka's story as a means to achieving this. He clarified what was meant by the state of "Common Beingness (*satta sāmānya*)."

Later it was debated whether a person attained the state of Common Beingness would be action-centered or meditation-centered. It was resolved that it was immaterial whether they were action-oriented or meditation-oriented as established through the story of the kings, Suraghu and Parighu.

The story of Bhāsa and Vilāsa was narrated to prove that it was necessary to have a high degree of determination to conquer mind through mind. Sage Vasishta provided an exhaustive account of mind, its nature and quality. He talked of the Paths of Knowledge and Yoga for conquering the mind. He described fourteen methods under Yoga approach in order to arrest the mind by controlling breath.

The story of Vitahavya was narrated to illustrate the Path of Knowledge. The unreal nature of time and space were discussed and he established that the phenomenal world was a dream within a dream, an imagination within an imagination and therefore could not be true.

He also clarified that the Annulment of mind was of two types – Annulment With Retention of Form and Annulment Without Retention of Form. *jīvanmuktas* are of the first type and *videhamuktas* are of the second type.

Next Sage Vasishta took up an explanation of the seeding of the phenomenal world. Self analysis, breath control and ridding oneself of past impressions were the steps to be followed for attaining complete quiescence of the mind, as taught by Vasishta.

Here ends the Chapter on The Calm Down.

[It is clear from the above brief presentation that the first two Chapters of Yoga Vasishta were of an introductory nature. They discuss Renunciation and the Attitude of a Seeker respectively. The third and fourth Chapters, viz. on Creation and Sustenance deal with the theoretical underpinning of the subject matter, Philosophical wisdom. The current Chapter on The Calm Down detailed the practical methods of nulling the mind. These five chapters constitute nearly 17,000 verses in the book. It gives the feel that what all has to be taught, has already been completed. But there is one more Chapter of a size almost equivalent to all the five preceding chapters lying ahead. What is still left out to be discussed in the remaining 15,000 odd verses? What is taught by the venerable sage in the final Chapter on Nirvana ? Let us now take up the next chapter to find out.]

82.6 Review Of Nirvana Prakarana – Purvaardha (Chapter: Liberation - Part 1)

The philosophical knowledge that had to be imparted to Rama was effectively completed with the Chapter: The Calm Down. Rama attained a tranquil mind by that time. In spite of it, Sage Vasishta desired to continue his teaching into the sixth Chapter: Nirvana. He gave two main reasons for this. One is that it is necessary that a seeker should again and again listen to scriptures until the past impressions are totally annihilated.

The second reason is that some of the average seekers in the assembly had not by that time achieved liberation and hence a repeat teaching was needed to help them. That is why symbolically, the current chapter opened with the preaching of Sage Vasishta and not with a question by Rama.

The sage said in the course of his teaching that even Brahma, Vishnu and Ishwar were part of nescience. When Rama contested this statement, the Sage, while explicating the issue, declared that knowledge too was a part of ignorance. He exhorted that it was essential to strive to transcend nescience. Rama raised then a question about the relative advantage between the Path of Knowledge and the Path of Yoga (referred to in the Chapter: The Calm Down) in transcending nescience.

Sage Vasishta advised that a person might adopt a method that would be convenient to him based on his tendencies (*samskāras*) and indicated that the ultimate result would be the same following any one of the approaches. He further added that he recounted more life stories of seekers on the Path of Knowledge thus far and hence he would like to illustrate the life of a seeker who followed the Path of Yoga.

Accordingly, he described the story of Bhusunda. He gave elaborate details on the techniques followed in the path of Yoga. Bhusunda's story also established that even the lowliest of people can adopt the Yoga approach which would carry them to the Path of Knowledge.

When the teaching was going on in that way, Rama was overcome by the force of the Knowledge gained by him and went into deep meditation. Sage Vasishta was not happy about it. For, he knew that serious minded people had a tendency to get absorbed in whatever a thing that they would take up for a deep study. So he woke up Rama from his meditation and taught him the sermon Lord Shiva had given to him (Sage Vasishta). Thus the story of Shiva was incorporated into his discourse.

Sage Vasishta illustrated a very unique blend of the devotional approach and knowledge path in the story of Shiva through the example of Mental Worship of Shiva. He finally proved that reverence to Shiva was the same thing as reverence to Self.

Rama declared that he had no further doubts after hearing the yoga, knowledge and devotional approaches to Self-Knowledge. Even then, Sage Vasishta described the essence of the Supreme through the stories of Bilwa and Shila. In his explanation of the stories, Sage Vasishta pronounced that there was nothing like nescience and it was just an explanatory fiction of convenience while teaching Self-Knowledge. He declared that initially a proposition was made that ignorance existed and then finally the proposition was falsified.

Next the sage showed that the Lord (*īśvar*) and the individual (*jīva*) were like an object and its image (a thing and its reflection) and proved that the image (reflection) was unreal. He continued the discussion in this context saying that The Composite of Eight Cities had two states – with form and without form. We have already reviewed the intricacies of this discussion at that point.

Sage Vasishta next taught the yoga of detachment and exemplified it through the story of Arjun. He discussed Bhagavad-Gita that Lord Sri Krishna would teach Arjun in future during the next oncoming Dwapar period. We presented a comparative study of the well-known verses from Gita before proceeding further.

In the current Chapter: Nirvana, Pūrvārdha the sage covered the path of Yoga through the story of Bhusunda, the path of devotion through the story of Shiva and the path of Detachment through the story of Arjun. He narrated the story of Chūdāla to illustrate the final state of one who attained liberation while living, in how many ways liberation could be obtained and how normal life is led in a liberated state. An 18 Sarga strong introduction preceded this story. A strange story of dreams in dreams of Hundred Rudras was narrated as a part of the introduction. He indicated that an individual would keep continuously moving from one phantasm to another, from one dream to another. He said that the individual would feel smug that he was constant and stable in spite of this movement and declared that such conceit was itself an illusion. He defined liberation as transcending the illusion.

He discussed the four types of Silences. They are:

1. Silence of Speech - no talking.
2. Silence of Organs - control of organs.
3. Statue like Silence - eschewing works that involve the body.

These three relate to the state of the statue like silence.

4. Silence of Deep Sleep - this is the unwavering state of mind after obtaining Self Knowledge. It is also called the Fourth Silence or *Turiya* Silence. It can be achieved only by *jīvanmukta(s)*.

"Though all the four are referred to as Silences, the first three are binding because there is some admixing of nescience in them. They cannot liberate an individual."

Sage Vasishta then proceeded to describe liberation dividing it into three stages:

1. Focused Contemplation on Non-dual Truth.
2. Dissolution of life-force.
3. Control of mind.

He narrated the short story of Bhetala in this connection. It is almost similar to the enigmatic Yaksha questions talked about in the Chapter: Creation. Therefore, he covered it in a swift manner.

Next comes the story of Bhageerath. Through this story, Sage Vasishta illustrated that in order to achieve the most significant tasks, one must first become a *jīvanmukta*, because only a liberated individual would conquer the most supreme objectives when he resumes work in the world. He showed in the story how Bhageerath achieved liberation and performance of action as per needs, before

embarking upon bringing down the river Ganges from the Heavens.

After a thorough discussion on liberation, Sage Vasishta took up the Story of Chūdāla to highlight the differences in approach in the achievement of liberation right in this life. He adopted the technique of simultaneously presenting an analysis along with the progress of the events in the story.

In this story, the lady obtained liberation ahead of her husband. She tried hard for her husband's liberation. She achieved yogic accomplishments, became a Guru for her own husband and tested his capabilities without any bias. When her husband was firmly established in liberation, she made him rule their kingdom again.

Sage Vasishta demonstrated one more method of achieving liberation through the Story of Kacha, son of Brihaspati. Complete renunciation was lucidly explained through this story. He established from this story that I-consciousness (ego) was unreal and lacked 'beingness'. As further proof, he concocted the sub-story of an Unreal Man. The moral of the story was that the seeker should not become the doer-experiencer-renouncer but should become the Great Doer-Great Experiencer-Great Renouncer. To buttress the concepts, he narrated the small Story of Bhringeeswar.

Rama at this point recalled that a tenuous mind with reduced impressions was called '*sattva*' in the second Sarga of the current chapter. He asked sage Vasishta to explain clearly the qualities of '*sattva*'. In response to it, the sage narrated the conversation between Ikshwaaku and Manu. He reviewed once again the Sevenfold Steps of Knowledge Path. It was a repetition of what was already taught in the 118th Sarga with some changes in the nomenclature of the steps.

Thus 122 Sargas of the chapter came to an end. A review of the subject matter covered so far was presented from 123rd to 126th Sargas in the form of a dialogue between Rama and Sage Vasishta. A question on the Steps on the Path of Yoga came up once again. The sage offered an explanation but slightly changed the names one more time.

Rama entered into deep meditation after a recap of the teaching. However, Sage Valmiki desired to convey something more. The text, Yoga Vasishta, was primarily meant for the use of average seekers. But the teaching of Sage Vasishta was targeted at Rama who was a highly qualified student. Therefore, what remained to be done was to demonstrate that the teaching was applicable to ordinary folk. So Sage Valmiki interrupted the conversation of Sage Vasishta and Rama and introduced the dialogue he had with his disciple Bharadwaj at this point. Sage Valmiki enumerated in 15 steps the process of absorption to be followed by a seeker.

Bhradwaj raised a question about the desirability of abandoning Vedic stipulated rituals by a liberated individual. Sage Valmiki replied that it would depend on the residual karma of the seeker. He also added that a seeker who accepted the path of Vividisha Sanyasa should not take up any sacrificial rites. He underlined the importance of disciplined practice for a seeker.

Having by now completed a thorough discussion of the topic, Sage Valmiki prolonged the text with a question from Bharadwaj. Bhradwaj queried how Rama returned to the empirical world dealings from his thoughtless deep meditation. In reply, Sage Valmiki said that Sage Vasishta had assumed a subtle form and entered the *sushumna* nerve of Rama and aroused him from deep meditation.

Taking advantage of the occasion, the propitious future course of Rama's life was presented through the words of Sage Viswamitra.

Yoga Vasishta, Book 6, Nirvana Prakarana - pūrvardha, Chapter : Liberation - Part1 comes to a close with Rama's praise of his teacher and Sage Valmiki's pronunciation on the effect of reading this noble text.

Thus ends this chapter which describes the entire course a seeker travels on in his quest for liberation. Sage Valmiki has another 7,000 verse strong Yoga Vasishta, Book 7, uttarārdha, Chapter : Liberation - Part 2 reserved for a description of the way great sages engage their minds in Brahman during their final stages. Let us now proceed to gather the gems of advice hidden in Yoga Vasishta, Book 7, uttarārdha, Chapter : Liberation - Part 2.

82.7 Review Of Nirvana Prakarana – uttarārdha (Chapter: Liberation, Part 2)

Please see Section 81 in this book.

The thrust in this part is on a recapitulation of the Knowledge of Self from the perspective of an accomplished seeker. It serves as *nididhyāsa*.

Thus goes the 32,000 verse strong sacred text of Yoga Vasishta containing the highest Knowledge taught by Sage Vasishta to Rama. The scripture follows a well structured design and an orderly narration. It progressively unfolds in graded steps the noble subject matter of Self-realization. The text builds in redundancy on purpose for the benefit of the seeker. It incorporates all such questions which normally one hesitates to ask and provides inarguable, unambiguous and complete answers. The book also lays special attention to the methods of practice to be adopted by a seeker.

Shri Rama and the Wise Sage Vasishta Together with the Resolute Poet Saint Valmiki illuminate a shining path in front of us, guiding our minds and leading us on the path, so that we realize the Supreme Brahman that we already are !

Om Tat Sat.

WORD GLOSSARY

WORD	*MEANING AS USED IN THE TEXT*

Adhisthana	Substratum.
Adhyaropa	Superimposition.
Aham	The sense of I, Embodied self,
Ahamkara	I-sense, I-consciousness, ego.
Ajapajapa	A yogic process of linking mantra japa with the cycles of breaths. For more details see Story of Bhusunda Under Section 8.
Anima	See under Siddhis.
Aniyata	Unregulated, Not sure to happen
Antahkarana	It is a combination of four types of intellectual activities called *Manas, Buddhi, Chitta*, and *Ahamkara*. Some texts translate 'antahkarana' as 'inner organ'. (The English word 'mind 'mind'generally denotes all the four functions of thinking, discrimination, memory and ego. But the word 'mind' is also used as a translation for *manas* in some texts. The Sanskrit word '*manas*' is also loosely used as a substitute for '*antahkarana*' in some contexts. The Sanskrit words *manas*, *buddhi* and *chitta* are also sometimes used to indicate *antahkarana*.)
Antas sanga (Sanga)	Forgetting that 'self' is actually Infinite Self and craving for worldly pleasures. The word *sanga* is defined in several other ways too. The literal meaning of *antas sanga* is internal attachment.
Apavaada	(i) Exception to a general rule. (ii) In the context of Advaita philosophy: A process of mentally negating series of superimpositions (adhyaropa).
Asamprajnata samādhi	The state when the mind is identified with the Supreme Self without any thought waves.
Atma	Individual self. The word atma without any prefix denotes a *jīvā* or *jīvātma*.

Avidya	Nescience; Ignorance about the Ultimate truth of Self of an individual. *māya* and *avidya* are sometimes used synonymously.
Bija	Seed, generally implies root cause. Sometimes it is used to indicate tiny things. Bija askhara (seed letter) refers to a letter that represents a very deep and elaborate meaning and spiritual significance.
Brahma	The personification of the creator. (see Brahman also)
Brahma Randhra (Sahasraara)	The vertex of the skull. It is said that there is a fine hole at the vertex and the Sushumna nadi passes up through this hole to connect the individual to the Brahma loka through Solar rays. Brahma randhra is the center of the seventh chakra which corresponds with the Pineal plexus.
Brahman	*Brih* means to expand, spread all over. It stands for the primordial undifferentiated changeless, limitless and everlasting, nameless substance that forms the substratum for the world. The Advaitic view is that Brahman is the Universal Self, the Absolute that appears as the world. Parabrahman is also used sometimes. The word Brahman ending with 'n' is used to mean the Universal Self while the word Brahma ending with 'a' is used to mean the creator. Braahmana etymologically means one who is knowledgeable of Brahman. In common usage *brāhman* denotes a social class/caste.
Buddhi	A part of *antahkarana* which is associated with decision-making faculty. In general literature this word sometimes indicates intellect.
Chaitanya	Consciousness.

(**Note:** A convention is adopted in the text in capitalizing the words that describe the Supreme Self or Pure Consciousness. Consciousness (with capital 'C') refers to the Supreme Self; consciousness (lower case 'c') refers to general awareness. Knowledge -

knowledge, Time - time, Truth - truth, Awareness - awareness etc. have also similar significance).

Chetya	Pereceivables, visibles, objects perceived in the world. The word "Percept" is used by us to indicate a map in the mind (brain) of what is perceived.
Chidaabhaasa sphurti	Chidaabhasha literally means reflection of *chit* and denotes I-consciousness. Chidaabhasha sphurti means experiencing the I-consciousness.
Chit	Same as *Chaitanya*
Chitta	A part of *antahkarana* associated with recapitulative faculty. In literature the words *manas, buddhi* and *chitta* are used to denote mind in general.
Chitta satta (Sarupa manonaasa)	Annulment of mind is of two types. When the mind is annulled with its form retained, it is called sarupa manonasa or chitta satta. When the form also is eliminated, then it is arupa manonasa which is none other than Videhamukti.
Dama	Restraint of the external functions of the organs.
ḍṛik	The name of the Seer when there is nothing to be seen; Used for the Brahman state. Potent-Looker.
ḍṛisya	The object seen, perceived.
Gunas	Refers to *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* - These three are the fundamental qualities or tendencies that underlie all manifestations.
Hiranyagarbha	Literally means "One with a Golden Womb." Represents the unmanifested cosmic mind and the creator.
Japa	Repeated recitation of a Hymn or the name of a God.
jīva or jīvātma	Individual self, embodied person.
jīvanmukta	One who realized that his self and the Supreme Self are One when he is still living.

jnāna samādhi	Knowledge-based Deep Meditation.
Jnāni	One who realized Self.
Kalpa	Period equivalent to 4.32 billion earth years. A span of 4.32 million years forms a set of Four Yugas. A thousand of such sets of Four Yugas make one day time of Brahman. Brahman has an equally long night time. The day time of Brahma is called a Kalpa.
Karma	Action. Also refers loosely to the effects of action. Karma is of three types viz. *āgami, sanchita* and *prārabdha*. The accumulation of the effects of all actions of the countless past births is called sanchita karma. Out of the sanchita karma, a small portion is segregated to be enjoyed during the present life. This specific portion is called *prārabdha*. The part of sanchita which is going to give us future births is *āgami karma*.
Kartritva	Doership, owning the responsibility for doing an action.
Linga *sarīra* (Sukshma *sarīra*)	Subtle body which consists of five sense organs, the five action organs, the subtle five elements, antahkarana and prana.
Lambika Yoga	A process of Hatha Yoga wherein the nerve under the tongue is cut so that the tongue can be folded back to press up the uvula and receive the drops of nectar from sahasraara.
Mahat	Intellectual principle as source of *ahamkara* (I-consciousness).
Mahayuga	The combined span of the four Yugas viz., Krita , Treta, Dwapara and Kali. It is also known as Chaturyugi.
Manana	Firming up in the mind that Brahman is the substrate of all things through continuous Reflection.
Manas	A part of *antahkarana* that is associated with thoughts and counter thoughts. Sometimes the word *manas* is used loosely to denote *antahkarana*.
Manvantara	Equivalent to 71 sets of Four Yugas.
māya	Illusion. The veiling and projecting power of Brahman. It is

like an operator "+". It does not associate with operands. Nor does it itself undergo any change. But it brings out an illusory change. E.g. Brahman + Thought is Hiranyagarba.

Mithya — One which is neither existent nor non-existent (apparition).

Mukti — Literally means liberation. It is of four types.

1. *sālokya mukti*: living permanently in the same world as the worshipped God.
2. *sāmīpya mukti*: Living permanently in close association of the worshipped God.
3. *sārūpya mukti*: Attaining the same form as that of the worshipped God.
4. *sāyujya mukti:* Merging with the worshipped God.

The above four types of liberation are followed in the Devotional path. Liberation in Advaita philosophy stands for complete identification with the Non-Dual Supreme Self.

nididhyāsa
nididhyāsana — It is the practice through Contemplation or Meditation of repeatedly focusing the residual thought wave on Brahman after the completion of the process of sublation.

Nimitta kaarana — Subsidiary instrumental or enabling cause.

Nirguna — Devoid of the three Gunas, attributeless.

Niyata — Regulated, Sure to happen

Niyati — The inexorable Laws of Nature. In this text this word is used to denote the natural principles of the universe, which are guided and determined by the thought process of the supreme creator, Hiranyagarbha.

Pancha Bhutas — The existence of an object in creation can be established only by experience. An object can be experienced only through the sense organs which are five in number. Each of the sense organs can detect only one attribute of the object and hence what constitutes the creation can be correspondingly five fundamental properties. Accordingly there are five fundamental elements. These are earth, water, fire, wind and space.

Para or Parama — Higher, Supreme, not belonging to this world. Para indicates others also.

Parabrahman	See Brahman.
pāramārthika	Paramartha means the Ultimate or the Supreme thing to be attained.That which is related to be attained Paramartha is pāramārthika.
Paramatma	Supreme Self, Universal Brahman.
Prarabdha, *prārabdha*	See Karma.
Parinama	Evolution. Formation of an object by re-arranging the parts in the material cause
Prakriti	Nature. Primal substance from which all things are created. According to Sankhya System there are two ultimate fundamentals of truth in the universe. They are *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. *Purusha* is the one with consciousness but He is actionless. *Prakriti,* also known as *Pradhana* , is inert but it is the creator of the universe. *Prakriti* has three intrinsic parts called *trigunas* i.e. *sattva, rajas* and *tamas.*
Pralaya	Complete merging, dissolution. Dissolution (with capital "D") that comes at the end of one cycle of creation. End of Kalpa.
Pratyabhijna	Re-cognition after a lapse.
Pratyaksha pramāna	Direct cognition. In Advaita philosophy, direct cognition connotes the identity of 'individual self' with the Supreme Self without mediation.
pravilāpana	Absorption. The mental process of traveling back taking the series of causes as steps and reaching the causeless Supreme Brahman. For details see Section 79.
Quintuplication	Panchiikaranam. i.e., mixing the five elements in a systematic way.
Rajas	The second of the three gunas. It signifies activity, energy, motion, Desire, anger etc.
Sādhak	Seeker on a spiritual path.

sādhana catustaya Sampatti — Fourfold Aids of Seeking:

1. Discrimination between the eternal (Truth) and the ephemeral (objects of the world) (*Nitya anitya vastu viveka*).

2. Renunciation of the worldly desires or desires pertaining to heaven (*Iha amutra phala bhoga viraaga*).

3. The six qualities like control of internal organs, external organs etc.(*samādi śatka sampatti*).

4. Unceasing Desire for Liberation (*Mumukshutva*).

Sadrupa — In the form of *sat*, Pure Existence.

Saguna — Associated with the three gunas, attributes.

samādhi — Thoughtless state of meditation. It is divided into many subtypes such as:

1. *abīja samādhi* - a *samādhi* wherein the sacred sounds of hymns like 'Om' are concentrated upon.

2. *nirbīja samādhi* – a *samādhi* where no sounds or thoughts are allowed to remain.

3. *savikalpa samādhi* – a *samādhi* where contemplation on the Supreme Self continues like an unbroken stream of oil.

4. *Nirvikalpa samādhi* – a *samādhi* where the aspirant's consciousness stays dissolved in the Supreme Self with an experience of total Oneness.

Samprajnāta samādhi — Deep Meditation. This is an effortless process of having the stream of thoughts filled with the Brahman.

Samsāra — State of Bondage. Also refers to the cycle of births and deaths, the visible world and the universe, which is considered to be a phantasmagoria.

Samskāra — see sanskāras.

Samvit — This word has been used with different meanings in this text.

	(i) a thought wave on knowledge; (ii) Pure Knowledge; (iii) Potent Knower.
Samyak jnāna	Proper Knowledge.
Sankalpa	Thoughts. Also sometimes intentions. Sankalpa vikalpa Thoughts and counter thoughts.
Sanskaaras	Innate tendencies.
Vasanas	Impressions of past actions carried in the mind.
sat	Pure existence; beingness
Sarga	A sub-chapter; Section within a Chapter.
Sārupya ṃukti	See under Mukti.
Satta samanya	Common or Universal beingness. For a detailed explanation refer to Part IV of our Series on Yogavaasishta.
Sattva (satva)	The first of the three gunas. It signifies qualities like goodness, softness, wisdom and the like.
Shama	Control of internal organs (mind). Abandonment of desires.
Shravana	Translated as Listening to scriptures in the present text. This is a practice towards the conviction and affirmation that the meaning of all Vedic statements indicates the Oneness of Brahman.
Siddhi	Yogic accomplishments, attainments. They are eight types. (i) Anima: Miniaturization. (ii) Mahima: Expansion to colossal size. (iii) Laghima: Becoming light. (iv) Garima: Becoming heavy. (v) Praapti: Materialization. (vi) Praakaamya: Teletransportation. (vii) IIsatvam: Supremacy. (viii) Vasitvam: Control of one's own organs.
Sloka	A verse or stanza
Sphurana	A flash. A flash-wave of thought.Arising of an experience.
Sphurti	Same as above
Sthiti	Sustenance is the process of sustaining something (i.e.

providing support physically or mentally). Some texts translate *sthiti* to mean maintenance (to cause something to continue in the same state or level). Other translations for sthiti adopted by some authors are: being; existing; subsistence; state.

Subsistence usually means 'to maintain oneself at the minimum level.' The word 'state' is commonly used for physical states of matter (e.g.: water, ice and steam). The words existence and beingness are commonly used as the meaning of the Sanskrit word 'sat.'

Hence we preferred here the word "sustenance" for *Sthiti* as it is more proximal to the connotation in Yoga Vasishta.

Svasvarupa	One's own original form – refers to the Supreme Self.
ṭādātmya-adhyāsa	ṭādātmya means identification of one with the other; *adhyaasa* means imagination. Ṭādātmya- adhyāsa is an illusory feeling that 'that is myself' or 'that is something else'.
Tamas	The third of the three gunas. It signifies lethargy, inertia, lust, cruelty and the like.
Tapas	Austerity, meditation
Tapasvi	Ascetic; one who practices austerities.
Triputi	Triad of the observer-observed-observing and the like.
ṭurīya	The fourth state which is distinct from the wakeful, dream and deep sleep states and exists pervading all the states.
ṭurīyātīta	The state beyond ṭurīya, generally corresponds to videhakaivalya. ṭurīyātīta is used by a few teachers to explain the all pervading Oneness because some mistake
Turiya	as a 'state' comparable to the other three states of wakeful, dream and deep sleep states.)
ūpadāna kārana	Material cause.
upādhi	Limiting adjunct. Also body.
Upasama	The calming down, stillness, quietitude, annulment or annihilation.

Utpatti	Creation, origination.
vāsanās	Impressions. Represent the influences from actions of past births.
Videhamukti	Liberation without body.
Vivarta	Illusory visualization of an object, a changeless-change
Vritti	Thought-wave, a modification in the mind.
Vyavahara	Mundane, worldly, transactional, operational, empirical.
Yuga	A span of 432 crores of human years was decided as the period of the whole universe and it is called Kalpa was subdivided into Mahayugas. A Mahayuga consists of 4320000 of Human years. A Mahayuga is divided into four Yugas called -*Kaliyuga, Dwapara yuga, Treta yuga and Krita yuga.*

Kaliyuga = 432000 human years
Dwapara Yuga = Kali x 2 = 864000 human years
Treta yuga = Kali x3 =1296000 human years
Krita yuga = Kali x4 = 1728000 human years

Mahayuga = 4320000 human years.

THUS
432 and three zeros make a Kali Yuga,
432 and four Zeros make a Maha Yuga
432 and seven zeros make a Kalpa

NOTE: The definitions of the words in this Glossary are compiled from several sources. We are grateful to all the original sources.

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